

**Faith Schools and Tolerance:  
a comparative study of the influence of faith  
schools on students' attitudes of tolerance.**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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## **Abstract**

### **Faith Schools and Tolerance: a comparative study of the influence of faith schools on students' attitudes of tolerance.**

Faith schools constitute approximately one third of all state-maintained schools and two fifths of the independent schools in England. Nevertheless they have historically been, and remain, controversial. In the current social climate questions have been raised about the ability of faith schools to promote Community Cohesion and, included within that, their ability to promote tolerance. This research explores one aspect of this debate by looking at the effect that faith schools have on their students' attitudes of tolerance. As well as asking what differences exist between students in faith and non-faith schools it also looks at which aspects of the schools might be impacting on the students and affecting their attitudes of tolerance. Using a mixed methods approach, this research looks at six English secondary schools, including a range of faith as well as non-faith schools, and from both state and independent sectors. The complexity and multiple meanings associated with the term tolerance are explored, incorporating different understandings and objects of tolerance.

Although not generalisable to the whole population of faith schools, the findings suggest that the categorisation of schools into faith/non-faith has little relevance when considering their effect on tolerance. In only one school were any differences found in the students' attitudes of tolerance which could be related to any particular aspect of the school. The students in the Muslim Independent school were found to be less tolerant of those people whose behaviour contravened Islamic teachings, and it is suggested that the school impacted on this attitude through less effective development of its students' cognitive skills, and the way it nurtured their religious identity. The research also finds that students in both the faith and non-faith schools were less tolerant of religious groups than they were of some other groups in society, which was seen to result from the nature of the contact with those of other faiths provided by the schools.

*For Henry  
and  
in memory of my parents,  
Sam and Joyce Totterdell*



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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

In 2005 David Bell (Guardian, 2005c), the then Chief Inspector for Schools, made a speech on Citizenship in which he suggested that many faith schools needed to adapt their curricula to ensure that children are helped 'to acquire an appreciation of and a respect for other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony' and that 'pupils should know the positives of a diverse community and its importance in a world where too many communities are fractured'. He expressed concern that 'many young people are being educated in faith-based schools, with little appreciation of their wider responsibilities and obligations to British society' (ibid). Within the speech explicit reference was made to Muslim, Orthodox Jewish and Evangelical Christian schools.

David Bell's remarks were interesting in that they were a public questioning of Government policy at a time when New Labour was promoting faith schools (Annette, 2005; DfES, 2005), but they were not novel, being part of a much wider, and ongoing, debate surrounding the place of faith in education, which in recent years has focused on the effect of faith schools on Community Cohesion. This thesis looks at one particular aspect of this debate around faith schools and Community Cohesion: the effect of faith schools on their students' attitudes of tolerance.

## **1.2 Faith Schools and their Effect on Tolerance**

Faith schools make up about one third of all state-maintained schools in England as well as being numerous in the independent sector, and as such are a significant provider of education. Schools of faiths other than Christianity have historically existed in England; Jewish schools have been part of the maintained system since the inception of the Dual System in 1902 (Gates, 2005). Since the wave of immigration in the 1960s, however, a greater number of faith schools catering to a variety of faiths have emerged. Most of these, due to well-documented issues over state funding, emerged in the independent sector (Ansari, 2000; Walford, 2001). Concerns about the increasingly secular nature of teaching within state schools meant that a number of New Christian or Evangelical Christian schools also

began at this time (Baker and Freeman, 2005; Everett, 2006; Walford, 1995; Walford, 2002) and the number of these schools continues to rise (Christian Schools' Trust, 2009).

Currently in England there are about 4,500 Anglican, 2,000 Roman Catholic, 100 'Other Christian', 2 Sikh, 37 Jewish, and 8 Muslim schools in the state sector, and just recently a Hindu primary has opened (Krishna-Avanti Primary School, 2011; Times, 2007). The majority of faith schools in the state sector are Voluntary Aided (VA) which means that 90% of the capital funding is provided by the state, with the rest coming from voluntary parental contributions or from the faith groups themselves. In VA schools the school site and buildings are owned by the faith group and the school is able to select pupils on the grounds of faith adherence, appoint staff on the basis of faith and appoint a majority of the governing body (DfE, 2011b). VA schools still have to follow the English National Curriculum and are inspected by Ofsted, but they are allowed to adopt their own RE curriculum, which may focus exclusively on their own faith. In addition there are other schools which come under the faith school label, such as Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools, and the situation is becoming ever more complex as a number of the new Academies and Free Schools are also being sponsored and run by faith groups or by groups with faith associations, such as Oasis or The United Learning Trust (Oasis, 2011; United Learning Trust, 2011).

As noted above, faith schools have historically been controversial within the English education system (Murphy, 1971) and, as will be discussed below, debates can be seen to have intensified over the past two decades. Concerns over faith schools are quite wide-ranging, including admissions (Allen and West, 2009; Schagen and Schagen, 2001), autonomy (Callan, 1985; MacMullen, 2007; McLaughlin, 1985) and segregation (Barker and Anderson, 2005; Pring, 2005). Increasingly questions have been raised about faith schools' ability to promote Community Cohesion (Berkeley, 2008; Ofsted, 2009) and within that whether faith schools promote the same values as those of wider society, among them tolerance (MacEoin, 2009). Although there is an academic aspect to this debate which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, much of it is played out in the public domain with faith schools being a popular topic in the media (for example Channel

4, 2010; Guardian, 2001b; Guardian, 2006b). Various groups have also expressed concern over the negative impact that faith schools might be having on their students' attitudes of tolerance (British Humanist Association, 2001; Guardian, 2006a; National Secular Society, 2008).

The nature of the concerns over faith schools and the promotion of tolerance put forward by these critics in the media is often imprecise. What is being tolerated, or not tolerated, is rarely defined and where it is made explicit tolerance is usually seen as being directed towards those of other faiths (Channel 4, 2010; Guardian, 2001a), or occasionally towards particular groups such as homosexuals (Guardian, 2008a; Hunt and Jensen, 2007). Why faith schools should be bad at promoting tolerance is often not made clear in these criticisms. Frequently cited arguments are that faith schools segregate on grounds of faith (Guardian, 2001b; Guardian, 2008b) and that the schools indoctrinate (Channel 4, 2010; Guardian, 2006b). Both of these can be related to the desire of the school to engage in nurturing and forming a religious identity which, in the more public discourse, can be seen to be connected to fears about the beliefs, values and norms which are part of that identity.

The criticisms of faith schools over their inability to promote tolerance, and by extension Community Cohesion, are strenuously denied by the schools, faith groups and some commentators (AMS, 2009; Guardian, 2005a; Immanuel Ministries, 2005; Odone, 2008). Those involved in faith schools would see no contradiction between their task of religious nurture (or the religious values they teach) and the promotion of tolerance (AMS, 2009; Brine, 2009). In his review of the impact of Church of England faith schools on promoting Community Cohesion, David Jesson (Church of England Archbishop's Council Education Division, 2009) found that a higher proportion of faith secondary schools were rated outstanding on Community Cohesion than was the case in community schools, although he found no difference at the primary level. He thus concluded that 'Faith schools play an important and positive role in both promoting Community Cohesion and Equality of Opportunity whilst taking positive steps in eliminating discrimination' (ibid, p.6). Recently the London Diocesan Board for Schools has presented similar findings highlighting the fact that 92% of their schools were judged by OFSTED as good or



outstanding on Community Cohesion, compared with 60% of non-faith schools (London Diocesan Board for Schools, 2009). Faith schools see themselves as under attack over their ability to promote tolerance and Community Cohesion, and feel that the expectations on them are higher than on non-faith schools. This in turn is creating resentment and frustration<sup>1</sup>.

As will become evident in Chapter 2, despite being a widely debated topic little empirical work has actually been done in this area, meaning that rarely does any discussion go much beyond claim and counter-claim.

In many ways my own experience of faith schools has been a motivation for this research. I am on the (Anglican) London Diocesan Board for Schools and am a practising Anglican. I have taught in a girls' independent school which has a religious foundation. Although the faith aspect of this school is not prominent, nevertheless it still makes reference to 'traditional Christian values' on its website (St Gabriel's School, 2011). Finally I myself attended a Roman Catholic girls' independent school for my secondary education. The criticisms of faith schools in respect of tolerance do not reflect my own experience. However, one experience at school did indicate to me the way that faith schools could close down debate and indoctrinate. In a Year 9 RE class in which for some reason we had ended up talking about purgatory the teacher only referred to the official Roman Catholic position and simply closed down debate when that position was challenged. This lesson has always stayed in my mind (possibly due to the way that the class reacted to debate being restricted) but it does mean that I can conceive of a situation in which some faith schools could be negatively impacting on their students' attitudes of tolerance. It is this nagging seed of doubt which has motivated me to explore this topic further, and which has led to the overall question being asked in this research, which is:

### **What effect do faith schools have on their students' attitudes of tolerance?**

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<sup>1</sup> This view was expressed in several informal interviews that I had with a variety of faith school heads in the early stages of this research.

This overall research question is approached by considering two sub-questions. The first considers to what extent, and in what ways, the attitudes of faith school students differ from those in non-faith schools.

**Question A:**

**What differences are there in the attitudes of tolerance between students in faith schools compared with students in non-faith schools in England, and where do any differences lie?**

The school is not the sole influence on, or source of, the attitudes held by its students. Therefore the second sub-question is concerned with the way that the school impacts on its students' attitudes of tolerance; essentially, what is the 'school effect'?

**Question B:**

**What effect does the school have on the differences in the students' attitudes of tolerance?**

### **1.3 A Note on Terminology**

In this thesis the term 'faith schools' is used to denote those schools which were the main focus of this research, schools which are understood to be ones which seek to nurture a particular religious belief. However, there are various terms, often used interchangeably (for example see Jackson, 2003 note 4 p. 100), which are also employed when referring to schools which have formal links to religious organisations, both in the state maintained and independent sectors (see Gates, 2005 for an overview of funding arrangements), none of which satisfactorily encompass the nature and variety of these schools (Parker-Jenkins, Hartas and Irving, 2005). This section will briefly discuss the most frequently employed terms, and explain why the term faith school has been adopted.

Some nomenclature is clearly inappropriate in this research. In some cases, for example 'Voluntary Aided' or 'Voluntary Controlled' schools, the term applies only to the state maintained sector. Neither do these terms apply in the case of

schools such as Academies and Free Schools, which are also associated with faith groups and which are becoming more numerous. Other terms, such as 'Denominational' and 'Church Schools', are situated within a Christian context, and as such are inappropriate in this research which looks across faith traditions. The tendency for the term 'Religious School' to be used of supplementary schools in which the faith is taught, such as madrassa and occasionally Sunday schools (for example Ansari, 2000; Halstead, 2002), as well as of day schools, means that this was viewed as a confusing term to use.

Currently the three most commonly used terms are 'School with a Religious Character', 'faith school', and 'faith-based school'. 'Schools with a Religious Character' was adopted by the UK government in the School Standards and Framework Act in 1998 (Parker-Jenkins, Hartas and Irving, 2005). Apart from being an unwieldy term to use, this term requires that schools are designated as such by The Secretary of State for Education, and again this only strictly applies to schools in the maintained sector (DfE, 2012). Schools of this type need to fulfil at least one of a set of criteria regarding governance and premises (see Appendix E for the list of criteria).

The term 'faith school' emerged in the light of the report *Schools Building on Success* in 2001. This report was seen as indicating a willingness to accommodate the increasing number of schools run by non-Christian faith groups, and the term faith schools likewise reflects this inclusiveness (Parker-Jenkins, Hartas and Irving, 2005). In addition to being used in the academic field, this term has been widely adopted, being frequently employed in policy discourse (for example *Faith in the System* (DCSF, 2007a)). This is also overwhelmingly the term that is used in the media and more public debate, such as the speech given by David Bell (Guardian, 2005b) referred to earlier in this chapter.

The final term 'faith-based schools' reflects a deeper discussion over the nature and distinctive features of schools associated with faith groups. Short (2002) in a footnote in his article on faith schools and social cohesion highlights this when he distinguishes Catholic, Muslim and Jewish schools from Anglican ones, noting that 'the charge of social divisiveness relates only to those faith schools that admit children from the founding religious community' (p.570). Here Short sub-divides

faith schools on the grounds of the nature of the education. Halstead (2002) makes a similar distinction proposing three categories of faith schools; those which minister to the whole community, those which emphasise intellectual and spiritual nurture, and those which restrict admission to members of their own faith. The distinction which emerges is between schools in which the intention is religious nurture, which is about strengthening religious commitment and preservation of 'the faith and its associated cultural identity' (Halstead, 2003, p. 282), and those where the emphasis is religious education. Although research by Jackson (1997) would 'challenge the sharp distinctions generally made between religious education and religious nurture' (ibid, p. 4) by people such as Ninian Smart and John Hull, nevertheless Jackson would still consider the distinction to be 'conceptually and institutionally important' (Parker-Jenkins, Hartas and Irving, 2005, p. 34). This distinction has led to the emergence of the term 'faith-based schools' which is used to describe those schools where the primary aim is faith nurture (Parker-Jenkins, Hartas and Irving, 2005).

This research is situated within a public and policy discourse. Therefore although, as discussed more fully in Chapter 3.4, the term 'faith-based schools' would be appropriate in this research, nevertheless I have chosen to employ the term 'faith school' as this is the term which is more commonly used in a public and policy setting. A working definition of the term faith school as employed in this research is given in Appendix E.

#### **1.4 The Increasing Debate Over Faith Schools**

Whilst faith schools have always inspired controversy, concerns and debates have intensified over the past twenty years or so. The nature of the debate too has changed, with a major focus now being related to the schools' ability to promote Community Cohesion and within that, tolerance. The reasons for this increase are complex and stem from a number of different factors, many of which interact. Whilst not professing to be exhaustive, the following discussion will briefly mention some of what I see as the important factors in fuelling the faith schools debate.

The increased religious diversity of the UK since the Second World War and the increasing demand from immigrant faith groups for recognition of their

religious identity has served to return faith and religion to prominence at a time when many in the West were forecasting a terminal decline in religion (Smith, 2008; Wilson, 1969). For some faith groups, establishing faith schools has been a way to preserve their religious identity and tradition (Merry, 2007). This in turn has reawakened older debates around the place of faith in education, ones which had died down in the case of established Christian denominations in the UK.

Two further factors are the introduction of the Citizenship curriculum within schools and the requirement on schools to promote Community Cohesion. In doing this the education policy has designated schools as important sites for developing positive attitudes of tolerance of diversity. As a result whether a school promotes tolerance has become a significant issue in a way that it was not in the past, when it was merely one of many vague expectations that schools were expected to fulfil.

Citizenship was introduced into secondary schools as a discrete subject in 2002 (Kiwan, 2008). The Crick report (Crick, 1998) in 1998 had begun the process of introducing Citizenship as a subject, although it is generally felt that the riots in the north of England in the summer of 2001 closely followed by 9/11 provided the final impetus for the decision to include Citizenship in the English curriculum (Kiwan, 2008). The first version of the Citizenship curriculum mainly concentrated on political aspects of citizenship. The Adjegbo (2007) report recommended a change and the inclusion of a new strand which explicitly considered identity and diversity, entitled 'Identity and Diversity: living together in the UK'. This was strongly underpinned by the concept of multiple identities and understanding, respecting and tolerating these. This new curriculum was introduced in September 2008 (QCA, 2008a; QCA, 2008b).

Since September 2007 (DCSF, 2007b) all state-maintained schools have been required to promote Community Cohesion. Again this seems to have come to the fore in the aftermath of speeches, such as that by Trevor Phillips in which he warned that England was 'sleepwalking into segregation' (Phillips, 2005), and at a time when English multicultural policies were being seen as having led to a situation where communities were living parallel lives (ibid). The urgent need for action on Community Cohesion was also shown by the London bombings in July 2005, the result of 'home grown' terrorists claiming to act in the name of Islam. The school's

crucial community role in being ‘a focal point for local communities and helping to build mutual respect and understanding’ (DCSF, 2008, p. 3) was highlighted in the Home Office’s ‘Prevent Strategy’ designed to tackle violent extremism (Home Office, 2008a; Home Office, 2008b).

These factors are coloured by two overarching elements. The first has already been alluded to. The rise of Islamic terrorism has clearly heightened and increased fears about the negative impact of faith generally and Islam in particular. The second is what is seen by some as a rise in an aggressive, fundamentalist form of secularism (Almond, 2010; Madan, 1998), and the ‘New Atheism’ expounded by people such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens. Rather than ignoring faith, this ‘New Atheism’ and the more aggressive secularist agenda actively challenges it and in so doing ironically increases its prominence in the public sphere.

It can be seen that these factors suggesting why the debate has intensified over recent years along with the significant proportion of faith schools in the English education system have heightened concerns over the faith schools and their ability to promote tolerance. The lack of empirical research in this area means that this thesis is not only necessary, but also timely.

### **1.5 A Brief Overview of the Thesis**

In attempting to explore the research questions in as comprehensive a manner as possible this study considers a range of understandings of tolerance and objects of tolerance, and examines a variety of schools which were selected not only to represent different faiths, but also to enable comparison on the basis of other criteria (this is discussed in detail in Chapter 3). It was decided that a mixed methods approach would be the most effective way to explore these various understandings of tolerance. A questionnaire would allow a broad overview of the students’ attitudes in each school, whereas semi-structured student interviews could look in more depth at the reasoning behind the tolerance responses and at more subtle and nuanced expressions of tolerance.

What began to emerge during the fieldwork and subsequent analysis of the questionnaire and interview data was that one school, the Muslim Independent

school, was significantly different in several respects from the other schools from which data had been collected. A consequence of this is that as the thesis progresses there is an increasing focus on this one particular school, an emphasis that was not anticipated at the beginning of this research. It should be emphasised at this point that the findings presented in this thesis apply only to the schools in this research and cannot be generalised to the whole population of faith schools or Muslim schools.

Few differences were seen between the other three faith schools which participated in the research and their non-faith counterparts and correspondingly no very significant differences were noted between their students' attitudes of tolerance. The difference that was found in respect of all the schools was that lower tolerance was shown by students in all the schools towards members of religious groups other than their own than towards other groups in society such as immigrants and those on the margins of society, for example youth ex-offenders.

The Muslim school differed from both its faith and non-faith counterparts in several ways. Unlike in the other faith schools critical examination of the faith was restricted in the Muslim school. The way that the students' religious identity was nurtured and portrayed also differed, with a greater emphasis being placed on its distinctiveness and on right practice, and there was also a strong perception of threats towards Islam. Although not universal throughout the school the quality of teaching did appear to be lower in the Muslim school and this in turn was related to the non-Western background of some staff. Differences too were detected in the students' attitudes of tolerance, most significantly towards those whose behaviour was seen to contravene Islamic teaching.

This thesis suggests that these findings concerning students' attitudes of tolerance could be related to particular aspects of the schools examined in the course of this research. It suggests that the finding in both faith and non-faith schools of lower tolerance being shown towards members of religious groups than towards other groups in society was related to the quality of contact with members of (other) faiths which the schools provided for students. In the Muslim school the lower tolerance shown towards those whose behaviour contravened religious teaching was related to two aspects of the school; the formation of the religious

identity and the way that the school less effectively developed its students' level of cognitive sophistication. But the thesis also argues that the findings in this research are related to discourses found outside the school in wider society. In the case of the difference in tolerance shown towards members of a different religious group the relevant outside discourses are secularism and multiculturalism, and, in the case of the findings in the Muslim Independent school, they are discourses found within some interpretations of Islam around critical examination of the faith, and Islamophobia.

Since tolerance is a complex and frequently ill-defined term, Chapter 2 discusses definitions and interpretations of this concept. It begins by defining how the term is used in this research before discussing the origins of the concept of tolerance and the ways in which education can be seen to affect it. It ends by considering what research has been conducted into the effect of faith schools on their students' attitudes of tolerance and related attitudes. Chapter 3, the methodology section, will look at how these various understandings of tolerance and interpretations of its relationship with schooling have been investigated in this study.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present an analysis of the schools in which the fieldwork was conducted, generating hypotheses which relate aspects of the schools to predicted tolerance outcomes. Chapter 7, also based on research carried out in the schools, analyses and compares the students' attitudes of tolerance, and presents the findings from this analysis. In Chapter 8 the hypotheses generated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are tested against the tolerance findings from Chapter 7, and the findings are discussed and tentative conclusions drawn – within, and related to, a wider context than that of the school. Chapter 9 provides a final summary of the findings and makes some concluding remarks which include a discussion of the limitations and significance of this study, while suggesting areas for further research.



## Chapter 2: Understanding Tolerance

### 2.1 Introduction

The main question investigated by this research is the effect of faith schools on their pupils' attitudes of tolerance. Tolerance is a term widely used in everyday life, but the concept is a complex one which encompasses a multitude of related, but subtly different nuances. This familiarity means that precisely what is meant by the term is rarely made explicit. Although subtle, some of the differences in usage could be significant in this research, making it necessary to understand the concept of tolerance in more detail, and make explicit what is understood by the term. Due to constraints on space much of the discussion in this chapter is necessarily brief, although the key areas for this research are presented more fully.

Tolerance, or more precisely intolerance, is closely associated with other widely used terms such as social conflict (which can be seen as an extreme form of intolerance) and prejudice. As research often uses these terms more or less interchangeably I have included research which looks at these associated concepts when trying to understand tolerance and its relationship to education. However, recognising that the conflation of these terms is not universally accepted I will briefly expand upon the relationship between prejudice and tolerance.

The interchangeable use of prejudice and intolerance carries with it the suggestion that the two are in some way linked. The distinction used by Paul Vogt is helpful in that he sees prejudice as a feeling, whereas tolerance is a 'behavioural disposition' (Vogt, 1997, p. 36). The two can therefore be linked, but that link is not inevitable. Having feelings about a group, or being prejudiced towards that group, does not necessarily mean that a person will act on those feelings and behave in an intolerant way towards them. This understanding of these terms does suggest that there is a good deal of overlap and that research into prejudice is likely to inform us about tolerance, although direct extrapolation must be applied with caution. Some would disagree with this approach, arguing that the two dispositions differ at the causal level. For example Oliver Cox (1970) strongly disagrees with the conflation of racial prejudice and social intolerance, maintaining that racial prejudice is caused by

exploitation whereas social intolerance is grounded in persecution, suppression and power struggles.

This chapter begins by defining how tolerance is understood within this research before briefly highlighting the main theories relating to the origin of the concept of tolerance. Next it looks at the relationship between education and tolerance generally, and finally, more specifically, research covering faith schools and tolerance.

## **2.2 Defining Tolerance**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

The concept of tolerance is widely held to be problematic (Horton, 1996). This section begins by giving a broad definition of tolerance before illuminating more specific aspects which lie beneath the definition, and thus how tolerance is understood in this research.

### **2.2.2 A Provisional Definition of Tolerance**

At a basic level tolerance is generally seen to consist of two components (Creppell, 2003). First there is some element of 'disapproval/disagreement with practices, beliefs, or persons' (ibid, p.2) with most people agreeing that you do not tolerate something that you already approve of or endorse (Walzer, 1997). Although not always acknowledged, within this assumption is the understanding that it is legitimate to disapprove of or dislike certain things (Quillen, 2005).

The second component of tolerance is that despite disapproval of some group, behaviour, belief or way of life, it does not constrain others who hold that view or behave in that way (Creppell, 2003). Trying to convince them otherwise is permissible, but stopping or coercing them is not. Combining these components provides a basic definition of tolerance:

'Tolerance is intentional self-restraint in the face of something one dislikes, objects to, finds threatening, or otherwise has a negative attitude towards' (Vogt, 1997, p. 3).

This definition of tolerance is implicitly working from a liberal perspective, which views tolerance as operating between individuals. However, some other cultures and some faith groups would conceptualise tolerance in a different way. Kymlicka (1996) highlights this point when commenting that Western democracies have a distinctive form of tolerance based on 'individual freedom of conscience' (p. 82). The most relevant alternative perspective in respect of this research is the communitarian one. Many Islamic societies and Islam in general are seen to have strong communitarian underpinnings (Sen, 2006) and although I would not claim that this is an official or widely held stance, Roman Catholicism has been linked to communitarianism, particularly through the work of Alistair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor (Annette, 2005; Swift, 2001).

The communitarian understanding of tolerance emphasises the group over individual freedoms of conscience, and considers that the liberal tradition places too little emphasis on community thus 'alienating us from one powerful source of human fulfilment and social cohesion' (Callan and White, 2003, p. 102). The conception of the human good is seen to be by necessity 'grounded in the thought and practice of some particular tradition' (MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002, p. 12) and thus it is impossible to show reciprocity and to respect others' beliefs without holding beliefs of one's own (Trigg, 2007).

The communitarian approach sees tolerance operating at the group level rather than that of the individual, and can be at the expense of tolerance of the individual (Walzer, 1997). Groups tolerate each other's practices and beliefs without interference. Within the group, alternative lifestyles and beliefs may be tolerated at the individual level, but not if they are seen to threaten the cohesion of the group (Kymlicka, 1992; Walzer, 1997).

Understandably, given that England is a liberal Western democracy, discussions about faith schools and tolerance conceptualise tolerance from a liberal perspective. But this raises questions, which this research does not have space to address, about the extent to which a school should be criticised for failing to promote a conception of tolerance to which it does not subscribe.

In order to use the above definition of tolerance as a basis for this research, the meanings of the two components of tolerance (disapproval/dislike and constraint) need to be clarified.

### **2.2.3 Component 1: Dislike and Disapproval**

The first question is, what is it that is being disliked or disapproved of, or what is the object of tolerance: is it a group, an action, a belief, a way of life (Horton, 1996)? Those who criticise faith schools in this area tend generally to focus on defined groups, such as other religious groups and homosexuals (British Humanist Association, 2001; Guardian, 2010). By referring to specific identity markers the Citizenship curriculum (QCA, 2008a; QCA, 2008b) too can be seen to be using specific groups as objects of tolerance. David Bell's (Guardian, 2005c) speech in 2005, quoted in the previous chapter, could be interpreted as referring to a different object. While it could be referring to particular groups, it more likely applies to differences in ideas and beliefs and possibly behaviours.

In this research therefore, in order to be able to explore the criticisms made of faith schools it will be necessary to consider a variety of objects of tolerance: both groups, in this case mainly based on the six markers given in the Citizenship curriculum (QCA, 2008a; QCA, 2008b), and situations where there is a difference in beliefs.

A second aspect of this dimension concerns the underlying reason for the objection; is the objection based on moral grounds or on emotional grounds more akin to dislike? John Horton (1996) strongly maintains that only forbearance of something where the justification for disapproval is based on a moral principle can be considered tolerance, and therefore must be based on something more than the agent's own perspective. Others would see this separation of motives into two distinct groups as a very difficult, often impossible, task. Instead they would see the two grounds as existing at opposite ends of a spectrum (Warnock, 1987). The difficulty of separating motives means that the latter position is the one taken in this research, although motivations are discussed.

This section has discussed what is being tolerated, but who decides what groups or behaviours are to be tolerated is also a valid question to ask. This research is partly prompted by criticisms made over the inability of faith schools to promote tolerance and as such the objects of tolerance either reflect those determined by education policy (e.g. those identity markers highlighted in the Citizenship curriculum), or reflect those referred to by other groups who express concerns about faith schools in this area. Although it is acknowledged that there is a valid discussion around why those particular identity markers were included within the Citizenship curriculum, this is a discussion outside the scope of this thesis.

#### **2.2.4 Component 2: Constraint and Behaviour**

The second component in the definition of tolerance refers to exhibiting restraint in some way. Walzer (1997, pp. 10-11) sees there to be a continuum of how restraint is expressed and this seems a good place to begin this discussion. Walzer sees five levels of expression, any of which could be legitimately understood as indicating tolerance:

1. Resigned acceptance for the sake of peace
2. Benign indifference to difference
3. Moral stoicism – others have rights even if they express them in unattractive ways
4. Curiosity; perhaps even respect, a willingness to listen and learn
5. Enthusiastic endorsement – diversity of God's creation or necessary condition of human flourishing

Although not solely and directly relating to tolerance the idea of outcomes being on a continuum can also be seen in Lynn Davies' work on teaching about conflicts (2011). She identifies various 'actions' which occur as 'a result of teaching and learning' (ibid, p.105) about conflict. In Davies' continuum the outcome is seen to run between negative conflict and positive conflict, but within that is the idea that these responses can be passive or active. It is this aspect, at the positive conflict end of the continuum, which I see as overlapping with Walzer's (1997) continuum given above. At the active end is 'dialogue and encounter' and

‘challenge to violence’ (Davies, 2011, p. 105) which can be seen to relate to Walzer’s fifth level of willingness to learn and the enabling of human flourishing. At the passive end Davies specifically mentions tolerance, but here tolerance has a fixed meaning and is related to indifference which therefore can be related to Walzer’s level 2.

This discussion about tolerance and the exhibiting of restraint as being on a continuum emphasises another aspect of tolerance; what is the outcome of exhibiting tolerance?

Tolerance is seen by some as a virtue and by others as being associated with a negative judgement (for example see Cranston, 1987), ‘mere toleration’ (Weissberg, 2008, p. 16) as it is often termed. The above continuum helps in the understanding of the basis of this debate. The concept of tolerance at the negative end of the continuum (in Walzer’s list probably levels 1-3) can be seen to relate to the concept of tolerance advocated by Locke, sometimes referred to as ‘classic tolerance’ (Weissberg, 2008). Locke’s perceived need for tolerance came out of a very specific religious context, although it was not solely restricted to relations between religious groups (Cranston, 1987; Williams, 1996). He maintained that as faith could not be enforced and had to be adopted voluntarily it was ‘irrational not to endure limited diversity’ (Quillen, 2005, p. 5). Tolerance for Locke was about allowing the Other to exist and follow their own beliefs and practices, but nothing more. What should be tolerated was seen to have definite limits (Locke and Gough, 1966).

On the whole people do not wish to be ‘merely tolerated’ (Horton, 1996, p. 36) and this brings us to the understanding of tolerance as a virtue. This concept of tolerance, relating to Walzer’s level 3, can be seen to draw on the work of John Stuart Mill and his emphasis on plurality. He acknowledged that different visions of the good life and different paths to knowledge existed (Quillen, 2005). Whilst not advocating that all these visions and paths were good, nevertheless error was not bad, and was necessary for stimulating debate which could enable one to come closer to the truth.

The form of liberalism resulting from this therefore sees the ability of a person to pursue and revise their own conception of the good life as a fundamental

right. Although contested, autonomy is seen as important for pursuing a flourishing life (Kymlicka, 1996). However, where tolerance is concerned, I would suggest that the most important underlying aspect of the flourishing life argument is the respect for human dignity or humanity. This derives from allowing individual choice and freedom and therefore is closely related to human rights. Although one may believe that the person is wrong it is one's overriding respect for their humanity, and therefore their right to choose and revise their own versions of the good life, which means that one tolerates that which one finds objectionable (Scanlon, 1996).

All the understandings of the outcomes of tolerance so far have required a person to refrain from acting. However, the notion can be extended further to suggest that tolerance requires us to help others to actively pursue their concept of a good life (Mendus, 1987). 'Respect for human dignity suggests that we have an ethical obligation to others that goes beyond simply allowing them to be autonomous.' (Quillen, 2005, p. 8). This can be seen to relate to Walzer's levels 4 and 5 which is, I suggest, the furthest extreme of what could be contained within the original definition of tolerance.

In some understandings of tolerance, however, the outcome goes beyond respecting autonomy and encouraging other conception of the good (Margalit, 1996). One line of reasoning which extends from the work of JS Mill is that our fallibility means that we are not able to judge between varying conceptions of the good life, and thus no one set of beliefs is any better than another (Graham, 1996).

A different view is taken by Popper (1987) who sees that fear of being intolerant results in us feeling that we must tolerate everything, but warns that in doing so 'we are in danger of destroying liberty – and toleration with it' (ibid, p.17). These two views signal a move away from one of the foundational elements of tolerance, which is that tolerance involves some element of dislike or disapproval, and therefore expecting a school to produce students who subscribe to this relativistic interpretation would be seen in this research as exceeding tolerance.

Two final issues are sometimes raised with respect to the outcome of tolerance which need to be mentioned in passing. The first is whether one can be tolerant of something that one is not in contact with (Mendus, 1987). The second is whether one can be tolerant of something when one is not in a position to actually

repress or suppress it (Creppell, 2003). This research is exploring the extent to which criticisms of faith schools in respect of tolerance are valid, and thus working within a framework in which certain assumptions have been imposed. The naming of identity markers in the Citizenship curriculum implies that the students will be in contact with these groups and that they are in a position to suppress them. Hence no further time will be given to these debates here.

### **2.2.5 Opposing Tolerance**

In this discussion about tolerance it should be acknowledged that the assumption being made by those who criticise faith schools (one which therefore underpins this research) is that tolerance is a worthwhile value, which all schools in a liberal democracy should be promoting. I personally subscribe to this view, seeing it as providing what Scanlon (2003) describes as ‘a framework of mutual respect’ (ibid, p.193). This framework gives me a means of living with the diversity of beliefs and lifestyles which I encounter in my everyday life. However, this is not a universally held view of tolerance. As this research is concerned with whether faith schools do affect tolerance, rather than entering into debates around whether schools *should* be promoting tolerance in the first place, the main criticisms will be only briefly mentioned here.

Horton (1996) sees that many liberals have an uneasy relationship with tolerance. Although they see it as necessary, nevertheless it has an element of undesirability about it in that it implies censure or disapproval of others. Others reject tolerance completely. Some would argue that tolerance was a ‘vice foisted on the world by hegemonic liberalism’ in order to ‘make the world safe for liberalism’ (Oberdiek, 2001, p. 17). In encouraging us to tolerate that which we know is wrong, doubts are sown about our deep beliefs, meaning that we lose confidence in our own convictions. This in turn undermines group solidarity, which is seen to threaten liberalism. Others would see it as not just supporting liberalism, but as more generally reinforcing social elites by disproportionately benefiting dominant groups (Jackman, 1996; Vogt, 1997). As Oberdiek (2001) says, tolerance can be seen as the ‘self-proclaimed prerogative of the arrogantly powerful’ (p.18).



Jackman (1996) maintains that tolerance can be seen to disguise brutal power relations by masking inequalities 'by directing attention to the diffusing of conflict without regard to its underlying causes' (ibid, p.46). A related criticism is voiced by Marcuse (1969) who believes that tolerance can lead to a situation in which people refuse to take sides, with this supposed neutrality actually protecting the powerful in their oppression of weaker groups. A similar point is made by Moore (1969) when he argues that tolerance encourages indifference, which again means that people fail to act against injustice.

### **2.2.6 Tolerance and Education Policy**

Finally, before going on to discuss the origins of tolerance it is pertinent for this research to consider what is understood by education policies and those who criticise faith schools for failing to promote tolerance as being the outcome of tolerance. However, this is something which is also rarely made explicit. The language used in the Citizenship curriculum specification (QCA, 2008b) suggests that at a minimum level tolerance implies respect for others. If viewed in conjunction with the Community Cohesion agenda it may even advocate helping people to pursue their concept of the good life. This would imply that the tolerance outcome would be understood at about Walzer's levels 4 and 5, but as this is unclear in the criticisms and education policy, this research will try and tap into these different understandings of the outcome. How this is operationalised will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **2.3 The Origin of Tolerance**

A necessary question to ask in respect of understanding tolerance is where tolerance, or intolerance originates. Research into this area can be considered on a continuum (Weatherell, 2004). At one end the attitude is seen to be innate and biologically determined, whereas at the other end social context is the key element, with the individual's thoughts being socially constructed. This section will briefly discuss the work suggesting that tolerance is biologically determined before focusing on theories which see tolerance as having a predominantly psychological, socially constructed origin. Within this a further distinction will be made between

those theories which see tolerance as related to the individual and those which see it as having a group component, as these two components are not seen as being mutually exclusive.

### **2.3.1 Sociobiology**

The notion that attitudes may have a genetic component is something which William McGuire (1973) says is considered 'only with trepidation' (p.49) because of the way that it has been, and can be, used as a justification for genocide, oppression and the perpetuation of social and economic inequalities.

Contemporary sociobiological arguments relating to tolerance focus on natural selection, arguing that a genetic disposition of hostility or selfish behaviour towards strangers, in particular those who are not of one's own kinship group, protects the gene pool. The individual may not survive, but by protecting the group the common genes will (McGuire, 1973; Weatherell, 2004). The favouring of in-groups over out-groups can thus be considered to be genetically determined.

However, few sociobiologists would maintain that the genetic component was the only, or even the most important, aspect of attitude determination. Nor would they suggest that genetic determination rules out the possibility of attitude change (McGuire, 1973), but would argue that the social context is usually the most important element.

### **2.3.2 The Cognitive Dimension: Stereotypes**

Some researchers working on the cognitive dimension of attitudes<sup>2</sup> would also consider attitudes such as tolerance as being in our nature. Allport (1954) in his book *The Nature of Prejudice* ascribed the origin of prejudice to a thinking error based on 'faulty or inflexible generalisation' (Weatherell, 2004, p. 190). These generalisations can be described as stereotypes in which traits or attributes are associated with certain groups of people, preventing people being seen for their unique characteristics (Weatherell, 2004). This process involves an evaluation aspect in which the out-group is denigrated and the in-group glorified.

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<sup>2</sup> The majority of research in this area has focused on racial prejudice rather than tolerance specifically.

Stereotyping was seen as an inevitable short cut, an idea furthered by social psychologists in the 1960s who came to see it as 'a consequence of the way human minds are structured to process information' (Weatherell, 2004, p. 191). The mind is unable to cope with the vast array of information unless it somehow files it into categories. Thus here the deterministic feature is that information will be categorised and stereotypes will be formed, not what each stereotype contains. Therefore intolerance of a particular group is not necessarily universal.

### **2.3.3 Tolerance and Prejudice: The Individual Dimension**

Although some may consider that there is a genetic determinism to prejudice, one of the fundamental beliefs about human nature is the concept of free will which enables us to act differently from what our genes predetermine. In the first half of the twentieth century much work was done on the nature of prejudice and intolerance from a psychological point of view. The origins of intolerance and prejudice were seen to relate to the individual, with group actions being an aggregate of individual action. Although briefly mentioning other authors, this section will concentrate on the influential work of Adorno (1969) and his concept of the authoritarian personality.

### **2.3.4 Adorno and the Authoritarian Personality**

Early in the twentieth century Dollard (Milner, 1983) proposed two theories to try and explain racial prejudice; the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis and the Scapegoat Theory. Aggression was seen to be a result of frustration. The target of this aggression was a generalised form of the original cause. If there was a strong inhibiting reason why the cause of the aggression could not be targeted, for example the target was in a particular authority role, the aggression was displaced onto others. These 'scapegoats' were often minority groups (Milner, 1983). Although these theories could account for prejudice on an individual level they failed to adequately explain mass behaviour or why certain groups remained targets over a prolonged period.

Freud and Marx, the atrocities witnessed in World War II, and fear of the rise of fascism in the USA seem to have provided the inspiration for the work by

Adorno (Roiser and Willig, 2002). Here the behavioural cause of intolerance was seen to be related to a disturbed personality, – a particular personality type, the authoritarian personality (Milner, 1983). This personality type included a 'constellation of attitudes' (Milner, 1983, p. 23) and, because prejudice was related to personality characteristics, the authoritarian person was more likely to express prejudiced attitudes (Weatherell, 2004).

Strong links have been made between this disturbed personality type and a person's upbringing and early socialisation. Thus intolerance is not considered as part of a person's nature, but is embedded early in a person's life. Parents of these types are often strict, but inconsistent, disciplinarians, and thus their children become obedient, but also ambivalent to authority. The resulting personality tends to be conventional, conformist, rigid, obedient and deferential to authority, and intolerant of ambiguity (Milner, 1983; Weatherell, 2004).

The need to form a favourable self-image and parental image means that feelings of hate and ambivalence towards the parents are displaced. Conformity means that these feelings are also repressed until they can be legitimately expressed (Milner, 1983). Thus, according to Adorno, the Nazi party and their hatred towards the Jews and other minority groups enabled those with an authoritarian personality to express their suppressed ambivalence in a socially supported manner. He argues that people with authoritarian personalities did not cause fascism, rather that fascism was appealing to those with authoritarian personalities. Adorno believed that the incidence of people with authoritarian personalities was high in Germany at that time due to prevalent child rearing ideologies. A main criticism of the work contests the likelihood of this occurring on such a large scale (see for example Weatherell, 2004).

One question which was raised about Adorno's work was the degree to which this authoritarian personality could be modified. Personality implied a degree of permanence and thus there was little scope for remedial action, with any change only being achieved through developmental therapeutics. However, the research conducted used five different scales – one personality and four attitudinal scales. This led others to consider that the effect is actually one of authoritarian *attitude*, rather than personality (Jacob, 1957; Roiser and Willig, 2002). Attitudes can be

modified by interventions, such as those used in many schools to tackle racism and homophobia, in which negative stereotypes are challenged (for example Stonewall, 2011).

A methodological challenge to Adorno's work came from Milton Rokeach (1960). Rather than disputing the concept of the authoritarian personality he criticised the way that it was measured, in particular the use of the F-scale which he saw as 'directed primarily (not solely) at bigots on the political right' (Rokeach and Bonier, 1960, p. 15) and therefore picking up solely right-wing authoritarianism. He suggested that there were two types of intolerance: content intolerance, which is about the actual belief (what and who is being tolerated), and structural intolerance, which relates to the way the belief is held and in particular the extent to which people's belief systems are open or closed (dogmatic). Open or closed mindedness relates to 'the extent to which the person can receive, evaluate, and act on relevant information received from the outside on its own intrinsic merits, unencumbered by irrelevant factors in the situation arising from within the person or from the outside' (ibid, p.57). For Rokeach the F-scale principally measured content intolerance whereas he saw the authoritarian personality as being more closely related to structural intolerance.

The Rokeach Dogmatism Scale was devised to measure degrees of authoritarianism, but rather than considering specific objects of tolerance this scale approached tolerance from a cognitive dimension, looking at structural intolerance. Comparisons of the scales used by Adorno to measure authoritarianism and the Dogmatism Scale have shown them to be highly positively correlated, thus the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale has become widely accepted as a measure of general authoritarianism (Hanson, 1968). Despite criticisms and predictions of an end to research in this area many studies still draw on this work (Ray, 1991; Roiser and Willig, 2002) with many social psychologists considering that personality contributes to intolerant and prejudicial attitudes.

Before leaving this section it is necessary to mention some research of particular relevance to this study, which found a high prevalence of authoritarian personality types represented in Evangelical/fundamentalist Christian congregations in the USA, but not in other Christian denominations (Feagin, 1965;

Rokeach and Bonier, 1960; Wilson, 1985). I am not aware of similar research relating to other faiths. In addition Lesser (1985) reports on the high positive correlation between the incidence of authoritarianism in parents and their children. The combination of these various findings raises the possibility that any difference in tolerance seen in the faith school students may be as a result of background characteristics, in particular their upbringing. The prevalence of people with an authoritarian personality is greater in some religious groups, meaning that within these groups the parents and consequently the children are more likely have this type of personality. A student may be less tolerant because they have a more authoritarian personality which itself is a result of their parental background and not of the school. Therefore it will be necessary to try to control for differences in authoritarianism in this research.

### **2.3.5 Tolerance and Prejudice: The Contribution of the Social**

A major concern about the authoritarian personality was that it was based on the individual and intra-individual interactions whilst ignoring the interaction with the social context (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). The racism and intolerance seen in Nazi Germany was a 'collective social action' (Weatherell, 2004, p. 200) and thus the authoritarian personality could not explain this fully. This has led to a body of work in the field of social-psychology which has considered the effect of the social context, and group membership, on tolerance. The two principal theories in this field, Realistic Group Conflict Theory and Social Identity Theory, are discussed below.

### **2.3.6 Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RCT)**

Oliver Cox maintained that social intolerance resulted from a power or status struggle where the dominant group would not tolerate the minority who they saw as 'inimical to group solidarity or a threat to the continuity of the status quo' (1970, p. 393). Following in this Marxist tradition, John Rex (1981) in his book *Social Conflict* concurred with the power struggle idea, concluding that the basis of all conflicts is power and economics.

Related to this is the work by Sherif and Sherif based on what is known as 'The Summer Camp Experiment' (Sherif, 1967; Weatherell, 2004). During the summer camp the Sherifs and their team worked at the camp and manipulated the situation, assigning the boys to various groups and then setting tasks/competitions and monitoring their response and behaviour. It was concluded that inter-group hostilities, an extreme expression of intolerance, were a result of conflicts of group interests – in the case of the summer camp, prizes in competitions. None of the boys on the summer camp were maladjusted and thus a second conclusion was that psychological maladjustment, as in the authoritarian personality's reliance on a particular type of childhood, was not a prerequisite for inter-group hostilities and prejudice.

The theory developed by LeVine and Campbell (1972) and Sherif (1967) which resulted from this and related studies became known as Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Stephan and Stephan, 2000). At the basic level this theory maintains that 'real conflict of group interests causes inter-group conflict' (Campbell, 1965, p. 287), but the causal sequence linking the two is seen to involve several stages. LeVine and Campbell assert that 'group conflicts are rational in the sense that groups do have incompatible goals and are in competition for scarce resources' (1972, p. 30). This competition results in the out-group being seen as a threat and in conflict with the in-group which in turn leads to the out-group being disliked; the greater the threat, the greater the hostility. An increase in in-group solidarity and identification with the in-group is seen to accompany any increase in competition (ibid).

### **2.3.7 Social Identity Theory (SIT)**

Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RCT) sees conflict between groups emerging as a result of conflicts of interest and competition over scarce resources (LeVine and Campbell, 1972). Work by Tajfel in the 1960s concluded that although competition for scarce resources was seen to be sufficient to bring about inter-group conflict, conflict could also arise in the absence of any competition. He also argued that RCT failed to fully explain some other observations such as increased levels of positive attachment to and identification with the in-group (Tajfel and

Turner, 1986) or paradoxically the way some minority groups displayed positive attitudes towards the dominant out-group whilst denigrating the in-group.

The work conducted by Tajfel, referred to as the minimal group studies, indicated that inter-group bias could be initiated in settings when there was no obvious source of competition and where group membership was at a very limited level; 'The mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups – that is social categorisation per se – is sufficient to trigger inter-group discrimination favouring the in-group' (Tajfel and Turner, 1986, p. 13). It was argued that instead of a direct relationship between group status and group competition, as suggested by RCT, the relationship was mediated through social identity, where social identity is seen as 'that aspect of a person's self concept based on their group membership' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 18).

Conflict for resources becomes neither sufficient nor necessary for inter-group conflict, instead the important factor is group identification. These observations led to the development of Social Identity Theory, which would see itself as extending RCT rather than dismissing it (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

Before discussing it in more detail some criticisms of the theory will be considered. The minimal group studies were challenged by Gerard and Hoyt (1974) (cited in Tajfel and Turner, 1986) who suggested that the experiments were in a sense rigged and that the act of informing the subjects of the respective groups in itself raised an expectation in the subjects that group was a relevant category. Subsequent studies used observer-subjects who failed to observe or predict any bias on the part of the subject. These further studies only served to confirm the ease with which this in-group favouritism/ out-group discrimination could be triggered (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

More general criticisms of Social Identity Theory focus mainly on the universality of the theory. Research has suggested that in some societies, such as Polynesia, where there is a greater emphasis on generosity, the subjects do not seek to maximise group difference, choosing fairness instead. However, it has been shown to hold in a European and North American context (Weatherell, 2004).

The Social Identity approach maintains that we possess two types of identity. The first is our personal identity which is derived from our unique



characteristics and experiences and is the identity which is used and directs us when we interact with people on a personal, individual basis (Herriot, 2007). The second is our social identity. It is important at this point to reiterate that neither personal nor social identities are seen as fixed, but are instead dynamic and 'a function of perceived and contextual factors' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 24). Sherif observed that there was a 'psychological discontinuity' (ibid, p.17) between behaviour that is engaged in using the two identity types, personal and social (the discontinuity hypothesis) and thus those taking the SIT approach would consider it inappropriate to extrapolate behaviour employed when using one type of identity to that when using the other.

In Social Categorisation Theory, a theory which emerged from, and is closely aligned with, SIT<sup>3</sup>, Turner expanded on the notion of the self. He suggests that at times we do not perceive ourselves as 'I', but instead as 'we' and operate as such when 'the social collectivity becomes the self' (Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 22). A consequence of this 'we' identity effectively becoming part of the self is that the person's actions are directed by it (Herriot, 2007).

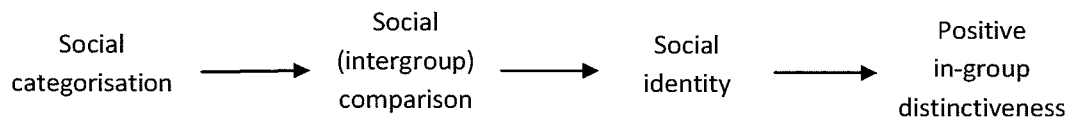
At a basic level the Social Identity approach suggests that when people become or consider themselves as members of a group they form or attain a social identity. Under certain conditions people evaluate themselves in terms of this group membership through comparison with other groups. It is considered a psychological necessity that this comparison should result in a positive evaluation which is achieved through inter-group differentiation (Turner, 1999). A slight difference in emphasis between SIT and RCT is indicated here. In RCT the cause of the inter-group conflict is explicit. In SIT the cause of the threat to the in-group's self-esteem is not the main focus of interest, as it is to some extent in RCT, rather the focus of the theory is on the way that group self-esteem is maintained, and the way that this affects a person's behaviour towards members of the designated out-group.

Once social categorisation has been initiated Tajfel (cited in Turner and Onorato, 1999, p. 18) sees a sequence of steps occurring which results in positive

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<sup>3</sup> SIT is frequently used as an overarching term which includes Social Categorisation Theory (See Herriot, 2007)

in-group distinctiveness and links these various processes. This sequence is considered to be



If the evaluation is negative or there is a perceived threat to a particular social identity then there are three ways that a person can go about changing that evaluation. These are discussed below after the introduction of another aspect of the theory.

#### **2.3.7.a Inter-group Continuum**

A second aspect of the theory which has to be considered is what Tajfel refers to as the interpersonal/inter-group continuum (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). The continuum describes the nature of the social interaction between individuals. At the personal end all interaction is determined by individual characteristics whereas at the group end of the spectrum their membership of a social group is the important criterion. The position along the continuum is determined by psychological and social factors such as whether a person sees the group they belong to as having permeable or impermeable boundaries. The closer that a person resides towards the inter-group end the more likely it is that they will act using their social rather than their personal identity (Hogg, 2006).

#### **2.3.7.b Changing the Evaluation**

The motivating factor within this approach is the maintenance of a positive group evaluation which is achieved through making the groups positively distinct. There are various ways that this positive social identity can be achieved or maintained if the social identity is perceived to be threatened.

The first is through individual mobility (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). A person who is discontented with the evaluation of their group may choose to disassociate themselves from the group or to leave the group entirely. This does not change the

group's status or evaluation and is a purely personal action. This course of action is only open to those who see themselves as 'socially mobile'.

Social Creativity is the second of the options for gaining a more positive social identity. In this method the group is itself altered and made more positively distinctive, and Tajfel and Turner posit three ways that this may be achieved (Tajfel and Turner, 1986, pp. 19-20):

- a. Making comparison on some new dimension
- b. Changing the values assigned to attributes, so making something which was seen as negative now become positive.
- c. Changing the out-group against which the comparison is made.

The final strategy is that of Social Competition or Bias. This is the only strategy which may result in lower tolerance and thus it becomes the focus of our interest.

#### **2.3.7.c Employing the Strategy of Social Competition**

The strategy of Social Competition does not necessarily need to be applied for achieving or maintaining a positive in-group evaluation, but is a possible strategy. However, as will now be discussed, a number of criteria need to be met before this strategy is employed and before group membership will direct behaviour (Herriot, 2007; Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Turner and Onorato, 1999).

##### **Criterion 1: Identification**

An important criterion that has to be met before a group identity can direct action is that the person actually identifies with the group in question. Hogg asserts that:

'if they [possible group members] have no sense of belonging, do not identify, and do not define and evaluate self in terms of the properties of the group then they are unlikely to think, feel and behave as group members' (Hogg, 2006, p. 117).

In addition to identification there are issues around how accessible and dominant that identity is (Herriot, 2007). A distinction can be made between identities which are 'chronically accessible' and those which are 'situationally accessible' (Hogg, 2006, p. 119). The former are characterised as those which are valued, important and frequently employed and the latter as ones which are employed in more specific situations (ibid).

### **Criterion 2: The Salience of the Identity**

This overlaps with the first criterion, but focuses more on the social context. In order that inter-group comparisons and evaluations can be made the person must first perceive that a group is present in that context, implying that a particular group identity must become mindful or salient (Herriot, 2007; Hogg, 2006). If I walk into a roomful of people, each person in that room has multiple social identities. The question is which groups, if any, do I perceive as present? One factor which determines any categorisation is the social context, so for example if I was at an interfaith event I would probably be more inclined to be categorising on the basis of faith rather than occupation. But it will also reflect the groups a person identifies with (Herriot, 2007). For example on a visit to Liverpool recently the people I interacted with were categorised by me mainly on the basis of their accents; Liverpudlian (or at least Northern) or not. One factor which determined that categorisation was the context of being in Liverpool, but the second was drawing on my own identity as a 'southerner'. Contrasting that with the experience of a friend who is also a southerner, but is in addition a great Everton supporter, when visiting Liverpool he would almost certainly, to some extent, have been categorising people by whether they were Everton or Liverpool supporters. Social context is important, but so too are other identities.

Other elements also help to determine which identities are salient. It is seen as important that the in-group is 'perceived as positively differentiated or distinct from the relevant out-groups' (Tajfel and Turner, 1986, p. 16). The meta-contrast principle extends our understanding of this by proposing that the salience of an identity increases when the differences within one's own group are less than the differences between one's own and a different group (Herriot, 2007). The way that

this maximisation is achieved is through the process of depersonalisation whereby the member's personal characteristics are ignored whilst highlighting those characteristics which relate to their group identity. The in-group form what is known as a prototype which Herriot describes as 'fuzzy sets of characteristics which are believed to describe group members' (Herriot, 2007, p. 31) and this is a way that one group can distinguish itself from another. Prototypicality relies heavily on notions of conformity, which can include specific beliefs, but also dress and norms of behaviour (ibid). In contrast the out-group is stereotyped based on the characters of out-group members (ibid). The more diverse the out-group is the more tightly defined the in-group needs to be in order for there to be clear distinction between the groups (ibid). The more the distinction is made between the in-group and the out-group the more likely it is that the group identity is going to direct behaviour and the higher the chance of inter-group bias (ibid).

### **Criterion 3: Which Groups are Relevant**

Comparison and potential conflict will only be directed towards those groups perceived as relevant. Relevance is associated with 'evaluative significance' (Tajfel and Turner, 1986, p. 16) which may be determined by a number of factors such as proximity (for example there is little to be gained for a religious tradition in the UK in comparing itself with a religious tradition only found in South America) but also similarity and situational salience. This latter can be linked to the notion of security and threat. The more threatened a group feels its position to be the more insecure it will become and the higher the likelihood that it will try to regain its positive self-esteem through inter-group competition (Herriot, 2007).

### **Criterion 4: The Perceived Social Structure of Inter-group Relations**

The likelihood of social bias being employed as a strategy for achieving positive group identity is also determined by the degree of permeability the group sees itself as having. Individuals in groups perceived as impermeable cannot leave or disassociate themselves from the group in order to join a group perceived as having higher group identity. Consequently they are more likely to employ inter-group competition. As Herriot describes it in extreme cases when the group is

impermeable and threatened 'the in-group has nothing else to lose; its members are stuck where they are, they feel threatened. All they can do is fight' (Herriot, 2007, p. 35).

### **2.3.8 Summary**

This section has demonstrated that the origin of tolerance is complex. The various theories have been presented here in isolation, but in reality these are rarely considered mutually exclusive, with several elements being seen to contribute to the overall tolerance outcome. This section has also highlighted that tolerance is not solely related to a person's individual characteristics and identity, but can also be influenced by their social identity. This point will be returned to and developed further at the end of this chapter where it can be seen to indicate a difference between faith and non-faith schools which might have implications for the way that the school impacts on tolerance.

This chapter continues by looking at the relationship between schools and tolerance and why faith schools might be problematic in this regard. Before beginning this discussion, as this research is primarily concerned with faith schools, it is necessary to briefly consider why many people consider that faith, religions and tolerance are antithetical.

## **2.4 Tolerance, Religions and Faith**

One aspect of inter-religious conflict and intolerance between different faith groups is likely to be related to the group identity, as discussed in Section 2.3.7. But is there also something more inherent in religion, or particular religions, beyond this group identity, which could make their members less tolerant? Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and the other 'New Atheists' would clearly answer yes. Others would dispute this inevitability. Although wars and conflicts have been fought, and terrible acts of violence and persecution perpetrated in the name of religion, examples of religions being a positive influence on society and social cohesion can also be highlighted (Allport and Ross, 1967), for example the work of people such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa and the Dalai Lama, as well as many interventions which occur at the local level. Many would maintain that

wars and conflicts which on the surface are about religion are, under the surface, about power (e.g. Northern Ireland) with religious differences being a useful rallying cry (for example Allport, 1954). It is therefore necessary to look deeper into this area and ask questions about when intolerance is likely to arise.

The relationship between religion and tolerance at a particular point in time can be seen to rest on two things: theological understanding and group identity, which itself can be seen to relate to the geopolitical situation. In the current climate in the West the geopolitical discussions focus strongly around Islam, and to a lesser extent the rise in fundamentalism generally (see amongst others Bennett, 2005; Esposito, 1999; Huntington, 2002; Lewis, 2003; Lewis, 2004; Netton, 2006; and Said, 1995). The complexity of the debates means that space does not permit any more than a highlighting of this area. However, some aspects will be returned to throughout the thesis in the form of discussions around religious group identity and tolerance. This section therefore focuses on theology and belief. An important point to emphasise is that the embodiment of theology has not been, and will not remain, static (D'Costa, 2009).

#### **2.4.1 Theology and Tolerance**

At this stage it is only possible to give a broad overview of some generally held positions in this area. Clearly, extensive variations exist within these generalisations, at the individual and institutional level. As will be discussed in Chapter 3 this research focuses on schools run by Muslim and Christian groups and therefore the discussion will principally relate to these two faith traditions. In trying to consider Christianity and Islam within the same framework, I am conscious of being open to criticism for equating concepts which do not directly equate, but I feel it is necessary to impose some framework onto this discussion.

Members of both Islam and Christianity would maintain that their religion is one of tolerance. But both the Qur'an and the Bible contain verses which can be, and more importantly have been, interpreted as justifying intolerance towards others. For example whilst the majority of Muslims would see Surat 9 verse 5 in the Qur'an (which says that idolaters should be slain unless they convert) (Pickthall, 1997) as referring to a very specific context and group, some Muslims associated

with extremist groups have used this to justify intolerance (Cook, 2000, p. 34). Some fundamentalist Christians would see their battle with Satan, who is working through ordinary people, as being justified by verses such as Ephesians 6: 10-20 which are couched in militaristic terms (Thomas and Freeman, 1996). Why do some believers act on these verses and others ignore them? The important element in understanding intolerance is not merely what is believed, but also the space where the belief and the way it is held (the nature of the belief) interact.

The term fundamentalist has to be used with caution on account of its contemporary pejorative connotations. Although the term originated in a Christian context it is now understood as applying to other religions and even in non-religious contexts (Ruthven, 2004). Fundamentalism relates to a collection of beliefs about the faith, but almost universally an emphasis is placed on the belief that this particular faith interpretation alone has possession of the unique inerrant truth (The Truth) (Tétreault, 2004). It is usually associated with a reliance on scripture, often considered inerrant, and with a faith or scripture which has been delivered through divine revelation (Ruthven, 2004). So, if believers hold that they are in possession of The Truth, they could by implication be led to the view that other beliefs are false and therefore not worthy of toleration. In Christian history the Inquisition is a well documented example of this. In addition, any challenge to the belief threatens the faith itself and thus it needs to be protected. Holding a faith in a fundamentalist way could be seen to increase the likelihood that adherents will act in a less tolerant manner towards those who do not hold their particular faith interpretation<sup>4</sup>. A slightly clearer understanding as to why some religious groups may be less tolerant can be gained by considering the threefold typology for the theology of religions developed by Alan Race. This is widely used, although modified forms of this as well as other typologies do exist (Race and Hedges, 2008). (For critiques see, for example, D'Costa, (2009) and Markham,(1993)).

Race's typology gives three basic categories 'into which Christian responses to other religions can be fitted' (Race and Hedges, 2008, p. 17). The particular emphasis is on salvation, but the categories also include ideas and beliefs about

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<sup>4</sup> For a wider discussion of fundamentalism particularly in relation to schools see Everett (2006).



truth, authority, revelation and scriptural inerrancy. Although in its original form the typology refers solely to Christianity the categories have been adapted and the understanding of salvation modified for use across different religions, including Islam (see for example Abou El Fadl, Cohen and Lague, 2002; Hick, 1995). The broad categories are:

**Exclusivist:**

Salvation can only come through Jesus Christ or, in the broader interpretation, only members of the faith will enjoy paradise. This is often associated with a broadly fundamentalist approach.

**Inclusivist:**

Salvation is only through Jesus Christ, but other religions may provide paths to salvation. In the broader interpretation, although the faith believes that their way is the true way to salvation it is possible that other religions are part of God's plan of salvation. Faithful adherents of other faiths may also gain salvation by following their own faith path.

**Pluralist:**

Jesus Christ is one revelation among many, thus there are various different, equally valid paths. In the broader interpretation there are many equally valid paths to salvation.

In addition to the motivation provided through holding a fundamentalist position in respect of faith, those who subscribe to an exclusivist theology can be seen to have a further motivation for showing lower tolerance or intolerance towards the Religious Other. If the ultimate end point of faith is about salvation (however that is understood) then if one's theological understanding of salvation is exclusivist it makes little sense to tolerate any other religion. More than just being wrong, a person who follows such a path is effectively damned. Furthermore other religions can potentially lure you away from the right path. It could be argued that an exclusivist theology makes it much harder to see value in the faith of others. The faith of others is worthless as only one's own, true, faith will bring salvation. Helping others to lead a different life, seen by Walzer (1997) as part of

demonstrating higher degree tolerance, is not just pointless, but is actually sentencing them to eternal damnation.

On the other hand, although a faith group with an inclusivist theology maintains that its way of life is the best way to salvation, it can support the notion that other ways of life can be valid and therefore to some extent worth pursuing. Thus helping others to pursue their way of life is not pointless, and tolerance can be shown. In recognising other paths to salvation as equally valid, a person holding a pluralist understanding of faith should have little trouble helping others to pursue their faith and have no theological motivation for being intolerant.

Most Christians in the UK today can be seen to be in the inclusivist category (Hick, 1995). The change in the Roman Catholic stance over the past 150 years is well documented; since Vatican II they can be considered as inclusivist (Cardinale, 1966). However, members of some Evangelical denominations, such as Pentecostals, are more likely to be found in the exclusivist category. As with Christianity, variation exists amongst Muslims in this regard, nevertheless many interpretations of Islam would be seen as tending towards an exclusivist theology.

## **2.5 Education and Tolerance**

Implicit in the criticism of faith schools in respect of tolerance is the assumption that education, and more precisely schools, can and do impact on tolerance.

Some research has suggested that the link between education and tolerance is certainly not universally true or straightforward (Green, Preston and Janmaat, 2006; Jackman, 1973; Jackman, 1978; Jackman and Muha, 1984; Merelman, 1980). The effects of education are often dependent on other factors with some studies making reference to the importance of prior socialisation in either negating or moderating the effect of education (Hagendoorn, 1999). Similarly Green, Preston and Janmaat (2006) have found that when considered cross-nationally there is no correlation between aggregate levels of education and tolerance. Intervening factors at the in-country level are again seen to moderate the educational effect.

Having questioned the inevitability of the link between education and tolerance, a large proportion of research has suggested that education does have a

positive effect on increasing tolerance, and other related attitudes (Haegel, 1999; Jacob, 1957; Plant, 1965). When compared to other social factors including religion, professional status, gender and age, Haegel (1999) concluded that education had the biggest impact on tolerance (see also de Witte, 1999; and Halman, 1994). This research goes beyond just asking whether faith schools affect their students' attitudes of tolerance, and will consider which aspects of the school are impacting on that attitude. Therefore it is necessary to understand the nature of the link between education and tolerance and so the next section considers how and why schools affect their students' attitudes of tolerance.

### **2.5.1 Why and How Does Education Affect Tolerance?**

Having established that education can be a major factor in the reduction of intolerance, this section discusses why that might be and how schools may impact on tolerance. What will become evident is that this area is complex and lacks any straightforward or well understood mechanism. Matters are complicated by the fact that research is approached from two angles, sociological and psychological, and that different studies conceive of tolerance in different ways, for example some studies look at prejudice whilst others focus on ethnocentrism.

In order to structure discussion in this area, this section categorises the research into how education impacts on tolerance under three headings based on those proposed by Vogt (1997).

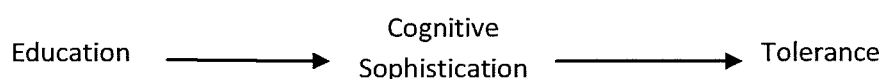
- Cognitive Sophistication
- Socialisation
  - Indirectly through personality
  - Directly through the curriculum
- Contact

These categories should not be seen as clearly demarcated, as overlap exists between them. Although others have also tried to assert some order over research in this area (for example Hagendoorn, 1999) Vogt's categorisation gives a comprehensive coverage of both the psychological and the sociological literature

on this topic as well as being the most practical one to assign to the real school context. The three categories will now be examined in turn.

### 2.5.2 Cognitive Sophistication

In Vogt's (1997) classification increased cognitive sophistication is an indirect way by which education may affect tolerance, in that education is not seen to affect tolerance directly, but works through increasing cognitive sophistication which in turn is seen to increase the likelihood of giving a tolerant response. In a number of studies the ability of education to increase tolerance through its effect on cognitive sophistication is seen as a very important, if not the most important, way that education works (Bobo and Licari, 1989; Selznick and Steinberg, 1969, cited in Vogt, 1997).



As little research has considered the whole process in a single study this will be looked at in two stages; the effect of education on cognitive sophistication and the effect of cognitive sophistication on tolerance.

The term cognitive sophistication is just one of many used to describe the ability to 'process large amounts of information and to differentiate' (de Witte, 1999). Other terms used include reasoning skills, critical thinking, intellectual flexibility, reflective judgement and cognitive complexity (de Witte, 1999; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Vogt, 1997). This multiplicity of overlapping, but at times quite specific, terms is confusing, therefore in this discussion the term cognitive sophistication is used to refer to all these various terms and aspects.

In their study *How College Affects Students*, after controlling for background characteristics Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) concluded that college has a positive impact on 'general cognitive skills and intellectual growth' (ibid, p.164). Various mechanisms have been suggested to explain how schools might increase cognitive sophistication. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) highlight learning in which abstract

concepts are developed from concrete examples<sup>5</sup>, problem-solving and social interactions with staff and students which focus on 'ideas or intellectual matters' (ibid, p.174) as beneficial (see also Torney-Purta, 1990). Others see cognitive sophistication being increased through schools increasing knowledge, bringing with it an openness to new ideas (Bobo and Licari, 1989; Hyman and Wright, 1979; Zellman and Sears, 1971). Others have suggested that the 'cognitive "climate" of schooling' (Vogt, 1997, p. 140) is important. Cognitive climate here refers to whether the school as an organisation operates in a flexible or rigid way, and can also relate to the nature of the learning. Complex learning tasks, particularly if accompanied by some degree of autonomy, are seen to act to increase intellectual flexibility (Miller, Slomczynski and Kohn, 1985).

Most noticeably in higher education and particularly in the Western tradition, debate, critical engagement and discussion have been, and still are, frequently employed aspects of education, and students are encouraged to gain these skills (Vogt, 1997). In England, critical thinking skills are included in the key skills or processes to be developed in many subjects such as KS3 and 4 Citizenship (QCDA, 2011) and GCSE RE (for example AQA, 2011b) as well as being available as a stand-alone subject at AS/A2 level (for example AQA, 2011a).

The positive link between cognitive sophistication and various forms of tolerance has been posited in a number of studies. Some of these focus on one specific aspect of cognitive sophistication such as divergent thinking (Zellman, 1975; Zellman and Sears, 1971) whereas others see a positive correlation between various forms of cognitive abilities and tolerance (Sidanius, 1985; Sidanius and Lau, 1989).

Studies by Peri (1999) and de Witte (1999), whilst not directly considering cognitive sophistication, see it as important in counteracting the negative effects of the intervening variables which operate between increased education and increased tolerance. These intervening variables include conformism and traditional values (Peri, 1999) and authoritarianism, anomie and cultural localism (de Witte, 1999).

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<sup>5</sup> This stress on developing more abstract concepts from concrete examples is very much the basis behind CASE 'Thinking Science' which has now been adopted in the KS3 Science programme of study in many schools in England (Adey et al., 1995).

This discussion will now consider the link between cognitive sophistication and tolerance. Tolerance is not a simple, single process, but instead involves complex decision-making (Jones, 1980a; McClosky, 1964). A person with a higher level of cognitive sophistication gains a better understanding of the complexity of arguments and an increased ability to consider causal relationships (Hagendoorn, 1999; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Vogt, 1997). Increased reasoning ability helps people to subject traditional societal norms or group prejudices to rational verification and thus a person is better protected against 'the passive acceptance' (Peri, 1999, p. 24) of those norms (see also Haegel, 1999).

Higher cognitive sophistication is also seen to result in a more consistent approach to problems (cognitive consistency). People become more likely to make decisions on the basis of principles, such as human rights, rather than emotions (Chong, 1993; Vogt, 1997). This means that they are more able to relate abstract beliefs to specific instances and be more consistent in applying principles across contexts (Haegel, 1999; Sniderman and Gould, 1999).

Bobo and Licari's research (1989) whilst finding that the 'cognitive sophistication measure accounted for a large share (approximately 33%) of the effect of education on tolerance' (Bobo and Licari, 1989, p. 298) nevertheless also suggests that this route to tolerance has a limit. They concluded that higher levels of cognitive sophistication only work in cases where the tolerance is based on moderately disliked groups, but has no effect when tolerance of 'extraordinarily disliked groups' (p. 305) is considered.

The positive outcomes of the acquisition of higher cognitive skills is disputed by Jackman and Muha (1984) who suggest that these skills can lead to a more sophisticated ideology. Rather than producing more liberated views this instead allows the dominant group to better protect or justify its dominant position.

Thus the research, although not without its critics, seems to suggest that education, mainly higher levels of education, does have a positive effect on tolerance with cognitive sophistication acting as a mediating variable.

### **2.5.3 Socialisation**

Education can be seen to affect tolerance through socialisation of the students into societal norms. This can be seen to work indirectly through the effect it has on the personality and more explicitly through the curriculum.

#### **2.5.3.a Indirectly – Personality**

Personality here is understood as referring to the underlying basis on which the person acts, and whilst not being fixed these foundational values or ‘enduring orientations’ (Sniderman and Gould, 1999) are stable and long-lasting (Vogt, 1997). In an abstract way personality has no obvious link to tolerance. The link emerges in the light of the beliefs, values and norms which are considered beneficial and important in a given society. In liberal England tolerance is one such value (Miller, Kohn and Schooler, 1986; Suzman, 1973). In order for society to function effectively people, and particularly in this case children, need to be helped to endorse these values in such a way that they are internalised and thus become part of the basis by which they will act (Durkheim and Wilson, 1961). Socialisation is the process by which people come to internalise those beliefs, values and norms. There are many socialising agents, including the family, and the important role which schools play in this socialisation process has been well documented (Dreeben, 1968; Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen, 1973; Miller, Kohn and Schooler, 1986).

Very little of this socialisation is seen to be part of the formal curriculum (de Witte, 1999; Dreeben, 1968; Inkeles, 1973). In their study *The Moral Life of Schools* Jackson et al. (1973) talk about the ‘formative potency of these institutions [schools] [which] extends far beyond the goals of the official curriculum’ (ibid, p.xii). Thus although schools are recognised as major socialising agents, the way in which they do this is not through direct teaching or in another direct way.

A number of research studies have found a link between education and tolerance through socialisation. A positive effect between education levels and tolerance was found by Haegel (1999) who saw the link working directly through the ‘reproduction and transmission of a value system’ (Haegel, 1999, p. 44). Although not disputing a link, some other studies see the link as more complex and as involving an interaction with culture (Holsinger, 1973; Inkeles, 1973; Inkeles and

Holsinger, 1973; Suzman, 1973) with some suggesting that this positive effect is only found in cultures where there is a liberal tradition of tolerance (Winkler, 1999).

Sniderman and Gould (1999) would see education as working indirectly by instilling more foundational values which, when activated, result in tolerance; for example the acquisition of the value of equality which can then be related to non-discrimination towards people on the basis of race. This focus on instilling foundational values is close to that proposed by Kohn (Vogt, 1997) who sees the effect of education as being about developing personality traits which are 'conducive to the development of tolerant attitudes' (Vogt, 1997, p. 120) rather than directly instilling the value of tolerance itself. Kohn's approach overlaps with the work on cognitive sophistication in that the main focus is on reducing the person's reliance on conformity and submission to external authority, which are considered to have a negative impact on the ability of a person to act in a tolerant manner (see also Miller, Kohn and Schooler, 1986; and Nielsen, 1977).

Research has also suggested various aspects of schools which may be beneficial in helping their students to develop their personalities to include the value of tolerance (Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen, 1973). Some of these are direct, such as spontaneous interjections or moral messages on posters, but many are through the moral practice, both of the school and the teacher (Dreeben, 1968; Ehman, 1980; Haegel, 1999; Keith, 2010), and relate to the idea that morals and attitudes are 'caught, not taught' (Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen, 1973, p. 11). Merelman (1980) contends that too often any positive impact is cancelled out by the authoritarian nature of many schools which give little credence to student views and agency. Finally a school climate conducive to encouraging tolerance is seen to be one which includes work which encourages the students to become more self directing and where the students have a degree of autonomy over the completion of tasks, rote learning is discouraged and independence of thought encouraged, in particular where students feel free to ask questions and to disagree with the teacher (Ehman, 1980; Miller, Kohn and Schooler, 1986; Nelson, Wade and Kerr, 2010; Torney-Purta, 2001; Vogt, 1997).



### 2.5.3.b Directly – Through the Curriculum

This section looks at the way schools directly influence or teach tolerance through the curriculum. The curriculum content of education is thought to affect tolerance through the way it influences the perceptions of out-groups (Haegel, 1999; Winkler, 1999), in particular by raising the barrier of erroneous information and reducing the reliance on stereotypes (Peri, 1999).

Despite tolerance being a core principle, the English school curriculum notably fails to prescribe how and what should be taught in this area, something it has in common with many countries. As Vogt comments

‘Tolerance very often is featured on governments’ and educators’ lists of goals they aim to promote in the school curricula. Tolerance often becomes one of those empty goals that sound important but also commit educators to very little. Seldom has explicit attention been paid to what tolerance in fact is and, therefore, to how one could hope to teach it’ (1997, p. 177).

Within the English school curriculum the two most explicit areas which link to the direct teaching of tolerance are in PSHEE<sup>6</sup>, which focuses more on moral tolerance, and Citizenship, which concentrates more on political tolerance (QCDA, 2011). Some aspects of RE can also be thought to have this function. But within each subject it is difficult to pinpoint where tolerance is specifically located. Both Citizenship and PSHEE are compulsory in English state schools, but the PSHEE programme of study is not statutory. In neither case do they have to be taught as discrete subjects, but can be embedded within other areas of the curriculum.

Citizenship, Civics and moral education in various forms are part of the curriculum in many countries, but there is remarkably little research evaluating such programmes (Janmaat, 2008a). The majority of studies which have considered the effect of Civics programmes on attitude formation and tolerance rarely see them as particularly effective in this regard (Ehman, 1980; Hagendoorn, 1999; Kiwan, 2008). Ehman’s (1980) research suggested that the curriculum was effective

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<sup>6</sup> Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education

in respect of students acquiring political knowledge, but not in changing attitudes (see also Niemi and Junn, 1998). The 2009 ICCS<sup>7</sup> study (Nelson, Wade and Kerr, 2010) found that there was a positive relationship between civic knowledge and tolerance in the English sample, but that the vast proportion of this knowledge came from background sources rather than the schools' Citizenship and PSHEE programmes.

Too much time teaching facts rather than engaging in discussion (Nelson, Wade and Kerr, 2010) and, related to this, the teaching of slogans and principles of tolerance rather than its real life application (Zellman, 1975), have both been suggested as possible explanations for the negligible impact of citizenship programmes. So too has the teachers' fear of the repercussions of dealing with some of the more contentious issues (Vogt, 1997; Zellman, 1975). Others suggest that most information is gained from sources outside the school and thus the school is teaching little that is new (Janmaat, 2008a; Nelson, Wade and Kerr, 2010). The perceived restriction on certain discourses within the school (for example support of the BNP) has been seen to result in students who endorse these views becoming unwilling to connect with any teaching in this area (Cockburn, 2007).

A few research studies point to there being a disproportionate effect. Jones (1980b) found that the effectiveness of different aspects of the curriculum varied with age. School climate was found to be most important at the youngest age (aged 9); strategies which encouraged participation at age 13; and knowledge becoming the most important at age 17. Germ Janmaat (2008a), looking at ethnic minority students, also highlights a disproportionate effect in the case of civic attitudes in general which could be explained by 'information redundancy' (Janmaat, 2008a, p. 50). The dominating group was seen to have more access to information on relevant topics from family, peers and other media than did their disadvantaged counterparts and thus the amount of novel information the school was supplying to the dominant students was less than was being supplied to the disadvantaged students. Janmaat concluded that:

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<sup>7</sup> ICCS: International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (See IEA, 2011)

‘schools can fulfil a useful role in helping disadvantaged groups to catch up with the dominating group and thus creating a more equal distribution of knowledge, skills and attitudes among the student population’ (Janmaat, 2008a, p. 50).

#### **2.5.4 Contact**

As discussed in Section 2.3.2 Allport (1954) ascribed the origin of prejudice to a thinking error. As a way of correcting these thinking errors and thus reducing prejudice Allport (1954) proposed the ‘Contact Hypothesis’. In its original form any contact between groups was considered beneficial in this regard, with the basic idea behind the theory being that contact between antagonistic social groups would ‘undermine negative stereotypes’ as well as reducing mutual antipathies (Donnelly and Hughes, 2006, p. 496). This is seen to result from a reconceptualisation whereby prejudice and stereotypes are reduced and changed through increased knowledge and understanding about the group. Subsequently the theory was refined to include criteria, discussed below, which should govern the nature of the contact, such that contact would only be considered to yield positive results if these were satisfied (Donnelly and Hughes, 2006; Short, 2002; Short, 2003; Smith, 1991; Vogt, 1997). Contact alone is considered unlikely to have positive results.

Unlike more traditional work on inter-group relations, which sees increasing knowledge about people and other groups as important for reducing prejudice and anxiety, the Contact Hypothesis also emphasises emotions. Empathy and being able to consider other people’s perspectives is considered better in this regard and works by ‘raising interest in the welfare of others, arousing feelings and perceptions of injustice, altering cognitive representations of the target group members and inhibiting stereotyping by taking the perspective of a member of another group’ (Davies, 2008, p. 91).

The criteria for contact to yield positive results are (Vogt, 1997):

1. Contact must be introduced swiftly and firmly, and enforced and respected by an authority. Thus schools need to take an active and full part in the

project and cannot merely rely on the students just mixing (Donnelly and Hughes, 2006).

2. The contact must be meaningful and be sustained over a period of time.

Some, for example Genesee and Gandara (1999), would contest the necessity of contact for improving inter-group relations. Research conducted by others such as Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) indicates that even casual contact can improve attitudes and behaviours, although the causality of this can be contested and studies are seen as being subject to self-selection bias (Vogt, 1997). However, most working in this field would maintain that although contact is necessary for improved inter-group relations, it is not sufficient in itself (Gurin, Nagda and Lopez, 2004) and hence the need for the contact to be 'meaningful', the most opaque of all the Contact Hypothesis criteria. Meaningful in this context is seen by many as needing to go beyond casual contact (Donnelly and Hughes, 2006), to what Dixon et al. (2005) refer to as a 'deeper form of contact' (ibid, p.697).

Although there is no consensus over what this deeper contact should necessarily involve, suggestions have been made. Some see that this deeper contact should help students to consider the significance that a particular 'thing' has in someone's life and should promote the idea of a shared humanity (Donnelly and Hughes, 2006; Rutter, 2005; Yablon, 2011). Others stress the importance of perspective-taking (Banks and Banks, 2004; Batson, Early and Salvarani, 1997). Some element of the engagement should be at the personal level so that friendships should be able to develop (Donnelly and Hughes, 2006), but also involve shared experiences so that the two groups become emotionally engaged (Davies, 2008; Smith, 1991). It should also ensure that underlying tensions are tackled and explored (Donnelly and Hughes, 2006; Gallagher, 2004; Yablon, 2011), something which can be related to Gurin et al.'s (2004) requirement that contact should stimulate students to 're-examine even their most deeply held assumptions about themselves and their world' (ibid, p.32). Several research studies have noted how difficult this is to put into practice as the school and the teachers are

reluctant to go into what they see as dangerous and contentious places (Cockburn, 2007; Gallagher, 2004; McGlynn et al., 2004; Richardson, 2006).

3. The groups must have equal status within the contact situation. This criterion is one which is easy to conceptualise, but harder to achieve in practice, particularly when the groups, which are often in conflict, are in a majority-minority situation as a number of studies attest (Davies, 2008; Donnelly and Hughes, 2006; Vogt, 1997).
4. The contact should involve cooperation rather than competitive goals, in a cooperative, not competitive setting. As Sherif's (1967) study shows, group loyalties quickly change in a competitive environment, and the aim of the contact is not to exchange one cause of conflict for another (Section 2.3.6). Participation in shared projects has been shown to increase friendly interactions and inter-racial friendships (Patchen, 1992, cited in Vogt, 1997).

Whether contact does bring about the desired results is debatable, with much research and evaluation having produced mixed results, and in some cases badly managed contact exacerbating inter-group animosity (Reed, 1980 cited in Vogt, 1997). Contact has been shown to increase prejudice in some cases by reinforcing stereotypes, particularly if the contact is not sustained (Cockburn, 2007; Donnelly, 2004a; Donnelly, 2004b; Smith, 1991). The effectiveness of contact is also questioned when the animosity is based on real differences of interest rather than just ignorant prejudice, or when there is a large gap between the two groups (Davies, 2008). As can be seen from the discussion above, fulfilling the necessary criteria is not always straightforward and this may in part account for the inconsistency seen in research in this area (Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux, 2005).

Other critiques of the Contact Hypothesis focus on methodological issues, particularly the nature of the sampling of the groups and the lack of realism in the contact (Donnelly and Hughes, 2006). Questions have also been raised regarding the extent to which the Contact Hypothesis actually changes understandings about the group as a whole, or merely changes them towards particular members of the

group, specifically those with whom the contact has been made (Short, 1993; Vogt, 1997).

Despite these questions over its effectiveness the Contact Hypothesis has been remarkably influential in the policy arena. In England various reports such as those into the riots in northern England in 2001 and the Runnymede report (Berkeley, 2008), have all suggested that greater contact is imperative for better relations and it can be seen to be an important part of the Community Cohesion agenda (Cockburn, 2007; Davies, 2008; DCSF, 2007b).

Principally based on this hypothesis it has been widely assumed in educational circles that schools with mixed populations are beneficial for tolerance. An example of this assumption can be seen to underpin many of the recommendations relating to schools found in the Cantle Report (Cantle, 2001) into the riots in Bradford in 2001. The assumed benefits of mixed school populations can also be seen in the desegregation policies in the USA in the 1960s (Vogt, 1997, p. 153) and the setting up of integrated schools and other interventions in Northern Ireland (Donnelly, 2004a; Donnelly, 2004b; Donnelly and Hughes, 2006; Smith, 1991; Smith, 2001). Returning to the English context, the Contact Hypothesis can be seen to underpin some of the criticism of faith schools in respect of tolerance, and this will be discussed further in section 2.6.1. There is, however, a growing body of research which holds that the effects of diversity on school populations are not always positive (Janmaat, 2010; Janmaat, 2008b) and that the effects may be inconsistent across different groups (Janmaat, 2010; Schofield, 2001).

## **2.6 Faith Schools and Tolerance**

In the previous section we saw that education has been shown to have an effect on tolerance. The mechanism by which education affects tolerance is complex, with education being an important, but certainly not the sole, contributor. The final section in this chapter will now look at the literature and research related to the effect of faith schools on their students' attitudes of tolerance. Despite the issues surrounding faith schools being widely debated in the media there has been little empirical work conducted into the effect of faith schools on pupil attitudes of tolerance or related attitudes, such as prejudice (Grace, 2003). The research which

has been conducted is quite disparate and the findings paint a mixed picture which to some extent could reflect the heterogeneity of the term 'faith school'. The limited amount of research in this area has meant that it has been necessary to draw upon studies which look at concepts and attitudes associated with tolerance rather than being able to consider tolerance alone. The disparate nature of the research also means that it is not easy to categorise the literature and thus the two approaches that I refer to here are only an aid to discussion, rather than strictly defined categories.

### **2.6.1 The Theoretical Approach**

The first approach to be discussed looks at the issue primarily from a theoretical perspective, with any empirical work being about evaluating interventions derived from the theory. Two main strands of argument can be detected, one relating to segregation, and the other to indoctrination and cultural coherence/primary culture. Both arguments relate closely to the literature on education and tolerance.

#### **2.6.1.a The Segregation Argument**

The segregation argument, as I term it, can be seen to have its origins in the Contact Hypothesis (Section 2.5.4). It also relates to a discourse wider than just tolerance, being the main argument that underpins concerns about faith schools and their contribution to Community Cohesion (Barker and Anderson, 2005; Berkeley, 2008; Cattle, 2001). Faith schools are segregated on the grounds of faith and thus their pupils have little or no contact with those of other faiths. Non-contact means that the students could be ill-prepared to deconstruct stereotypes and thus, Short and Lenga (2002) would argue, whilst not increasing prejudice these schools may sustain prejudice.

Evaluations of interventions which draw on the Contact Hypothesis have been the focus of a body of research in this area of faith schools and tolerance, mostly concerned with faith schools in Northern Ireland (Davies, 2008 (Chapter 5); Donnelly, 2004a; Donnelly, 2004b; Donnelly and Hughes, 2006; Lindsay and Lindsay, 2005; Richardson, 2006). Alan Smith's (1991) evaluation of the 'Education for

Mutual Understanding Programme' in Northern Ireland found that the programme produced mixed results. Although it gave the pupils an awareness of other communities, Smith was not certain to what extent it enabled the pupils to see issues from alternative points of view. The nature of the contact was crucial and concern was expressed that in some situations the contact in fact reinforced stereotypes.

Lindsay and Lindsay's (2005) comparison of integrated and sectarian schools in Northern Ireland did find that the students in the integrated schools were more tolerant than their sectarian counterparts, although the students' home backgrounds were not controlled for. As integrated schools were likely to be chosen by more liberal parents this home background, rather than the school, could account for the difference found. Moreover, Donnelly (2004a; 2004b) questions the effectiveness of integrated schools suggesting that the issues of real disagreement were not discussed and resolved, just glossed over and that there was an over-reliance on the benefits of contact alone.

#### **2.6.1.b Indoctrination or Cultural Coherence?**

The second major argument about why faith schools might be bad for tolerance relates to the area of cognitive sophistication, but tends to be discussed in terms of whether faith schools are indoctrinating or are educating for cultural coherence.

Faith schools are seen as promoting a particular set of beliefs, values and norms, which in many cases reflects those held by the students' families, but which may be different from and 'lack endorsement by the society in which they live' (Merry, 2007, p. 78). In promoting only one set of beliefs some would argue that the school is indoctrinating its students and that this has a detrimental effect on tolerance. The precise meaning of indoctrination can be a contested area, nevertheless the following definition given by Pring (2005) covers the main elements. Indoctrination is teaching 'so as to close the mind, to curb or atrophy the individual's growing autonomy, or to teach as certain what was essentially controversial' (ibid, p.58). The effect of closing the students' minds is seen as encouraging children to 'identify in a sectarian fashion rather than with the larger



collection of their fellow citizens' (Brighouse, 2006, pp. 78-79) as well as reducing the students' cognitive skills, which amongst other things may reduce the ability of the individual to think beyond the obvious, thus reducing tolerance (Vogt, 1997)(see Section 2.5.2). Concern is also expressed over the extent to which faith schools restrict autonomy and the range of choices available to the students, both of which are closely associated with the development of these cognitive skills and thus with tolerance (for example see Brighouse, 2006; and Pring, 2005).

This view is contested by those who would want to highlight the importance to the child of having a stable primary culture and there being cultural congruence between school and home (MacMullen, 2007; McLaughlin, 1984; Merry, 2007). Cultural congruence can be seen as improving self-esteem (Short and Lenga, 2002) and producing a strong sense of identity which in return can be 'a wonderful resource for combating prejudice, stereotyping, and maltreatment' (Merry, 2007, p. 97), although this positive effect of cultural congruence can be strongly contested (Callan, 1985; Gardner, 1998).

Even those who support the effectiveness of cultural congruence would want to put limits on the length of time a child should be restricted from engaging with alternatives. It is proposed that the sheltering effects should be weakened gradually in line with developing cognitive processes, and critical thinking should be encouraged, particularly at the secondary stage (McLaughlin, 1984; McLaughlin, 1985).

Merry (2007) warns that the other side of forming a strong identity 'could also be rooted in tribalism' (ibid, p.97) hence the forming of in-groups and out-groups which could in turn exacerbate intolerance. O'Keeffe (1992) also suggests that the firm social basis can lead to reproduction and not development. She comments how in some New Christian schools 'no contrary vision of society is allowed to disturb or disrupt patterns of reproduction. In contrast other schools are attempting to strike a balance between necessary stability and destructive openness' (p.106).

### **2.6.2 The Exploratory Approach**

The second approach is more exploratory and as such differs from the more theoretical emphasis of the first approach. The research which takes this approach either focuses on the school, and makes inferences in respect of student attitudes from that, or focuses on the students, sometimes relating this implicitly back to the school. It will be seen that very little research actually links aspects of the school to the attitudes of the students.

#### **2.6.2.a The School**

Ethnographic and school studies have been conducted on a variety of faith schools as well as research having been carried out on various aspects of faith schools, both in the UK and other countries, for example: Rizvi (2007) on Muslim schools, Rose (1988) on Evangelical Christian schools and Harroff (2004) and Johnson-Weiner (2007) on Amish schools. For those interested in the effect of faith schools on attitudes the studies are frustrating. They provide valuable insights into the schools, and highlight the considerable diversity of schools which can be found associated even with just one faith or denomination, but rarely do they connect what is going on in the school to potential outcomes in terms of the attitudes of the students.

Research which has looked at aspects of the school includes Short and Lenga's (2002) study into Jewish schools and their response to diversity. A variety of attitudes were displayed by the heads who were interviewed including 'a minority [who] regarded the whole notion as an irrelevance and were reluctant to do much more than that demanded by the National Curriculum and the National Learning Strategy' (ibid, p.53). Nevertheless, overall the research concluded that the notion that these schools were necessarily divisive could not be supported.

The next two pieces of research to be discussed look at tolerance more specifically. In 2009 following concerns about the way in which independent faith schools were preparing their students for life in Britain, which included concerns about the promotion of tolerance, the Secretary of State commissioned Ofsted to conduct a survey of independent faith schools looking at whether they fulfilled the statutory requirements in this area (Ofsted, 2009). Apart from criticising a few

schools for using teaching material which was biased or which 'provided inaccurate information about other religions' (ibid, p.5) independent faith schools were seen to be fulfilling the statutory requirements and Ofsted found no reason to suspect that faith schools were failing to promote tolerance.

Fifty-one independent faith schools were visited during the research. However, the report's research methodology does not give any indication of how the schools were chosen or to what extent they were free to refuse to participate, although the implication of the report is that all the schools approached were willing. The lack of sampling information means that it is hard to gauge how representative this sample was of the wider faith school population. If the schools were able to decline to participate this could result in a selection bias, as it is more likely that those schools who were unwilling to participate would be the ones who were failing to meet the statutory requirements.

Denis MacEoin's (2009) Civitas report *Music, Chess and Other Sins* does not concur with the Ofsted report's findings, a difference which may be related to how representative the schools in the Ofsted survey were, as discussed above. He concludes that certain types of Muslim schools found in England today are detrimental to tolerance. His report suggests that these schools, which he classified as those run by non-violent religious fundamentalists who subscribed to a literalist interpretation of the Qur'an, see education as 'a process of inoculating children against infection by Western ideas' (ibid, p.viii) and he sees the separatism promoted in these schools as undermining religious toleration. Although this is one of the few studies to have tolerance as its main focus it needs to be viewed with caution. No research was conducted in any Muslim school, instead the report was based on an internet survey of school websites and websites associated with the schools and thus did not necessarily reflect what actually occurred in the schools.

Far from being seen as anathema to diversity and tolerance, in some instances the religious affiliation and religious teachings underpinning the schools may be seen as enhancing the pupils' tolerance of diversity, or at least are perceived by parents as doing so (Haegel, 1999). Walsh's (2000) study into Jesuit education and the way that the education changed from the 1970s, with new

understanding and interpretations of Ignatian spirituality<sup>8</sup> (see also Elias, 2002) also makes this connection between religious belief, schools and positive values.

### **2.6.2.b The Students**

Whilst not directly relating to tolerance, some research from the students' perspective does suggest that the school might have an effect on their students' attitudes. Ap Sion et al.'s (2007) ongoing longitudinal study following graduates from New Christian schools found that while many of the male students found their school experience positive some commented on the expectation of 'conformity rather than difference' (ibid, p.10). Moreover they felt that their limited experience of the outside world made them unprepared to interact with non-Christians. This lack of experience in relating to members of diverse communities was also highlighted in Huerta and Flemmer's (2005) study of pre-service teacher training in Utah. In this study, as in others, it is the congruence between home and school rather than the school alone which is seen to be problematic (see Peshkin, 1986; and Rose, 1988).

Research looking at the attitudes of faith school pupils has largely concentrated on single denomination studies, predominantly Roman Catholic, rather than being comparative across faith traditions or making comparisons with non-faith schools and has tended to focus on a range of attitudes, not just tolerance. These studies have all seen the impact of the school as being positive, producing well-rounded individuals (Flynn, 1993; Grace, 2002; Walsh, 2000).

In the limited number of studies where attitude comparisons have been made, the lack of difference in values is more striking than any disparity (Dronkers, 2004; Francis, 2005; Peshkin, 1986). Greer's (1993) study comparing the openness towards the Religious Other of students attending Roman Catholic and Protestant schools in Northern Ireland did find differences between the students, with the Catholic school students being significantly more open than the Protestant ones. Nevertheless, he also highlights that 'despite the years of violence and bloodshed since 1969, pupils of secondary school age were inclined to be open rather than

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<sup>8</sup> The Jesuit religious life is based on the spiritual life and writings of St Ignatius Loyola.

closed towards “the other side” of the Northern Ireland community’ (ibid, p.458). Reporting on research conducted in the Netherlands, Dronkers (2004) concludes that ‘on the whole one cannot find large differences among public and religious schools in the noncognitive domain’ (p.304) and also reports similar findings from a Belgian study by Elchardus and Kavadias. Francis (2005) found that, in comparison to other non-denominational schools, the boys in New Christian schools held more conservative attitudes to sexual morality, which he maintains ‘demonstrates that the boys attending Christian schools have been influenced significantly by this teaching’ (ibid, p.135), whereas in terms of being law-abiding, the attitudes of the two groups were not significantly different. Peshkin’s study (1986) found that students at a fundamentalist Christian school in the USA showed less racially prejudiced attitudes, but were less tolerant of civil rights compared with students in the local school. As this discussion has indicated, a review of the research in this area does not give a clear indication that faith schools are necessarily negatively impacting on their students’ attitudes of tolerance. Again, in all the research mentioned here tolerance is one attitude amongst several being looked at rather than being the sole focus of the study.

Even fewer research studies can be found which directly relate what occurs in the school to the attitudes of students. Peshkin’s ethnographic study (1986), *God’s Choice*, looking at the Bethany Baptist Academy (BBA), a fundamentalist Christian school in the USA, is probably the most extensive and detailed study of this type. Using interviews and questionnaires in order to ‘measure’ various attitudes, in combination with a detailed ethnographic study of the school, he was able to comment on the extent to which the school, primarily by the way that it promoted religious identity, impacted on the students’ attitudes. The way that the school impacts on its students’ views and attitudes is not always negative, as was highlighted above. Walsh’s (2000) research focused on how the Jesuit character of the school was reflected in the curriculum and to what extent this was evident within the students’ values. Thus he again connected the school and the outcome in terms of student values.

From these attitude comparisons it is hard to conclude that faith schools, even those very fundamentalist schools such as BBA, are necessarily bad for

tolerance, although the research does indicate that differences do exist between faith and non-faith schools in this area.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

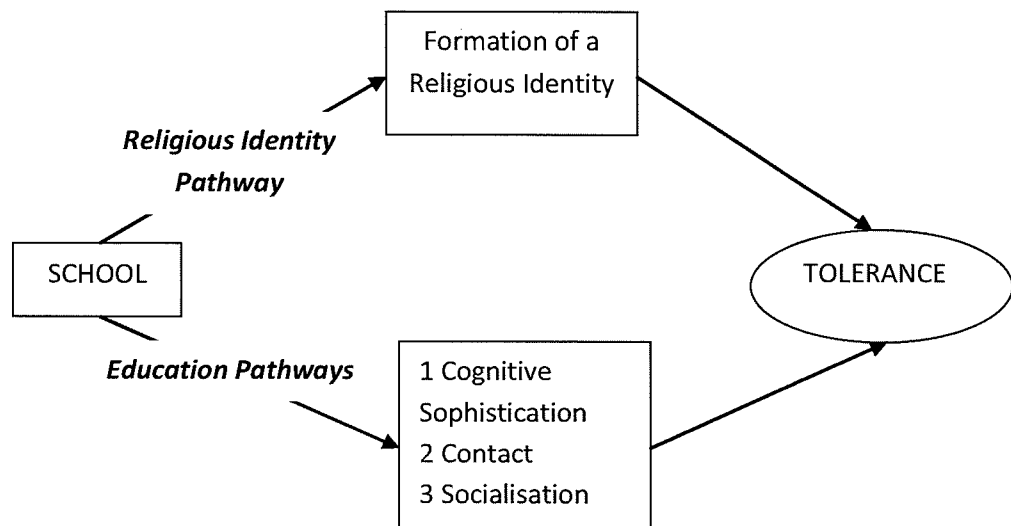
This chapter has looked at tolerance from a number of different perspectives. Tolerance has been shown to be a complex area made more confusing by a lack of consistency in how the term is used.

Having considered how tolerance can be understood, a definition of tolerance was given which is being used in this research. Tolerance can be seen to be about disapproval and one's response as a consequence of that disapproval, which at the lowest level advocates restraint from action. This chapter also emphasised that when exploring tolerance two elements needed to be defined, the object of tolerance and the response. In order to reflect the criticisms of faith schools it was suggested that a variety of objects of tolerance and responses to tolerance should be considered in this research and these will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

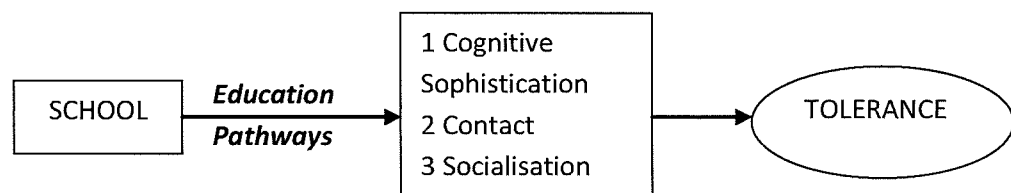
Education, and thus schools, were seen to impact on tolerance, and the literature suggested that this occurred through three main pathways; through cognitive sophistication, through contact with others, and through socialisation (direct teaching and personality development). Differences between faith and non-faith schools in one or more of these areas could result in differences in the students' attitudes of tolerance. A person's attitude of tolerance in a given context was seen to be unlikely to originate from a single source, and would probably include components related to their individual characteristics and identity as well as their social identity (Section 2.3.7). One of the main aims of many faith schools is faith nurture, helping the student to learn about and identify with a given faith tradition; in essence the formation of a student's religious (social) identity. Whilst some would argue that non-faith schools are also involved in identity formation, whether that be civic or otherwise, in England at least this is certainly not the main stated aim of education. This aim of faith nurture and the formation and promotion of a particular social identity can be seen to be a major difference between faith and non-faith schools. Therefore as well as the three education pathways, an

additional pathway was highlighted in faith schools, that of the religious identity and the way that the school is involved in the formation and nurturing of that identity (see figs 1 and 2).

***Faith School (fig1)***



***Non-faith School (fig2)***



What this chapter has highlighted is the lack of research that has been conducted into faith schools and their students' attitudes of tolerance, a gap which this research aims to reduce. The existing research is mixed, with some findings indicating faith schools as having a negative effect, but in most cases any difference is insignificant, or the results are inconclusive. In addition the broader literature on

tolerance has indicated that there are three gaps in the research which in my opinion are significant for an understanding of the impact of faith schools on the tolerance attitudes of their students.

The first gap is that no research has been found which explicitly looks at how the students' attitudes of tolerance are impacted by the way that the faith school promotes a religious identity. Reference to faith as a social identity is often made in discussions about faith schools, and some research studies, usually the more in-depth school studies, discuss how individual schools promote aspects of their particular identity, but no link is made to tolerance. This research aims to fill this gap by considering this aspect of the school, along with the three aspects of the education pathway.

The studies which looked at tolerance using a more exploratory approach revealed the second gap in the research. The majority of research in this area relies on inference when discussing how faith schools impact on their students' attitudes of tolerance; either some aspects of the school were studied and inferences drawn from that, or various schools were compared, with differences in the students' attitudes being implicitly assumed to be related to the school. Conclusion on the existence of relationships which rely on inferences is questionable, perhaps more so in the area of tolerance, which this chapter has shown to be a complex one. In addition little mention is made about which aspects of the school are important. Therefore in contrast to much existing research this study looks at the whole process linking the students' attitudes of tolerance to particular aspects of the school. It will do this by gathering information about the school from a variety of sources as well as determining the students' attitudes of tolerance, as is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

The final gap in the literature is that none of the research looking at faith schools and tolerance has actually focused on tolerance alone. Unlike other research in which tolerance has been one attitude amongst many, in this study tolerance is the sole attitude of interest. Furthermore a variety of tolerance responses and objects of tolerance are considered.

As has just been discussed the three gaps in the literature on faith schools and their effect on their students' attitudes of tolerance have been described in this



chapter. Having briefly indicated the way in which this research aims to reduce these gaps in the literature the next chapter discusses this aspect in greater detail.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the previous chapter was to give a broad understanding of tolerance, particularly those aspects which are relevant to education and faith, and to define how tolerance is understood in this research. It also reviewed previous research in the area of faith schools and their impact on tolerance, indicating the gaps in the literature which this research has aimed to fill. This chapter will now detail how the research was conducted, the methods employed, and why they were considered appropriate for answering the research questions, drawing on the understandings of tolerance previously discussed.

The two research questions in this study ask what differences there are in attitudes of tolerance between students in faith and non-faith schools, if any, and secondly how the school might be involved in this. The focus in the first research question is therefore the students' attitudes of tolerance towards a range of objects of tolerance, and at different degrees of tolerance. In the second research question the focus is the school, and in particular the aspects of the school which were highlighted in the last chapter as possibly impacting on tolerance: cognitive sophistication, contact, socialisation and the formation of the religious identity. As will be discussed in more detail in this chapter these two foci are seen to be most effectively approached using mixed methods.

It became apparent, as discussed in the last chapter, that little research has been conducted in this area and thus this research is exploratory. It is not aiming to make statistical generalisations to the whole population of faith schools, but to explore which aspects of a school appear to impact, primarily negatively, on its students' attitudes of tolerance. The limitations on the extent and nature of the generalisations associated with a qualitative approach are not problematic and any generalisations will be analytical (Yin, 1994) or produce what could be termed a "working hypothesis" about what might occur in the other situation' (Schofield, 2002, p. 180). Therefore the extent to which the conclusions drawn in this research relate to other schools of the same type must be viewed as tentative.

This section begins by looking at the two foci before detailing the choice of schools.

### **3.2 Determining the Students' Attitudes of Tolerance**

The first focus is the students' attitudes of tolerance. In order to find out if there are inter-school differences some means of determining the students' attitudes of tolerance is required. The majority of research into attitudes of tolerance, both cross-national studies such as ICCS and Eurobarometer, as well as smaller scale studies, employ questionnaires (Eurobarometer, 2011; Francis, 2001; IEA, 2004). The anonymity of the questionnaire increases the chance that the students will give realistic rather than socially acceptable responses (May, 2001; Munn and Drever, 1999). The standardised nature of the questionnaire allows direct comparisons to be made between the schools and has the potential to highlight particular areas of similarity and difference (Munn and Drever, 1999). However, it also means that subtle differences cannot be detected, nor can reasons behind choices be explored (Arksey and Knight, 1999). I perceived this as a possible weakness in tolerance research and therefore aimed to rectify this by combining a questionnaire with face to face interviews in which moral dilemmas were posed and the students' reasoning explored. These latter questions were given as part of a longer semi-structured interview. Although the questionnaire could be administered to a large number of students in each school it was impractical to interview more than eight students in each school.

This research is exploring the criticisms made of faith schools over their ability to promote tolerance, and so the way that tolerance is defined reflects these criticisms. Questions exploring the students' attitudes of tolerance needed to reflect both the various understandings relating to the outcome of tolerance and the variety of objects of tolerance reflected in those criticisms.

Walzer's (1997) conceptualisation of tolerance, which considers definitions of tolerance as being on a continuum, indicates the variety of understandings of the outcomes which can exist. As the outcome of tolerance was ill-defined in the criticisms of faith schools, it was decided that this research would look at a variety of outcomes based on Walzer's continuum. It will be recalled that five degrees of

tolerance were identified (Walzer, 1997, p. 11) although given that it is a continuum the boundaries between the degrees are blurred.

- Degree 1: resigned acceptance for the sake of peace.
- Degree 2: passive, relaxed, benignly indifferent to difference.
- Degree 3: moral stoicism, a principled recognition that 'others' have rights even if they exercise those rights in unattractive ways.
- Degree 4: an openness to others, curiosity and perhaps respect. A willingness to listen and learn.
- Degree 5: this is about an endorsement of difference – making space for 'men and women whose belief they don't adopt, whose practices they decline to imitate; they coexist with an otherness that however much they approve of its presence in the world is still something different from what they know, something alien and strange'. Living with a 'particular difference' that you may find 'very hard to live with'.

Because of the overlapping nature, and sometimes quite fine distinctions between the degrees it was deemed pragmatic to consider the five degrees as forming two groups or modes. For reasons that will become apparent these two modes were labelled as passive and active tolerance. Lynn Davies (2011) uses these terms in a similar way in her typology of approaches to teaching about conflict (Chapter 2.2.4) .

### **Passive tolerance**

This mode of tolerance is related to the first three of Walzer's degrees given above. To some extent this is characterised by an element of indifference and little willingness to interact. It primarily focuses on the granting of rights (degree 3), and whether or not a relevant human right awarded to the group is used as an indicator of this degree of tolerance. These lower degrees of tolerance generally require no action on the part of the person exercising tolerance, rather they require non-interference and thus have been termed passive tolerance.

### **Active tolerance**

This primarily relates to Walzer's degrees 4 and 5 and this mode considers tolerance as going beyond the granting of human rights. Instead it is about the willingness to be open towards, and form an emotional connection with, an other. It is particularly related to recognising the significance that a given belief, object or behaviour has in the life of another person. Beyond this it can be seen to relate to a willingness to help another person or group to achieve their version of a good life, despite disapproval on the part of the person doing the tolerating. The crucial aspect of this degree of tolerance is action or interaction. In the most straightforward cases this involves being willing to assist the group in some way, but action may not directly relate to the person or group, for example learning more about another culture can be seen in this way. Hence the term active tolerance is used. The questionnaire and the interviews were designed to explore both these areas of tolerance.

The objects of tolerance, as discussed in the previous section, were influenced by the criticisms of faith schools over promoting tolerance, and therefore predominantly, but not solely, the questions focused on those identity markers given in the Citizenship curriculum (QCA, 2008a; QCA, 2008b): sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, religious belief, disability and ethnicity. The questions also tried to explore the students' tolerance of a less easily defined concept, that of diversity of beliefs. This related to tolerance of those who held beliefs different from one's own and as this research was primarily concerned with faith schools the beliefs in question were restricted to those based on religious understandings.

A brief description of the development of the questionnaire and the interview questions used to determine the students' attitudes of tolerance will now be given. Before being administered to the research schools the questionnaire underwent two pilots with modifications being made at each stage. More detail on the piloting of the questionnaire is given in Appendix C. The questionnaire itself and the student interview schedule are given in Appendices A and B respectively.

### 3.2.1 The Attitude Questionnaire

Items relating to tolerance were contained in two sections of the questionnaire (Appendix A), the other sections being related to background characteristics and the students' religious identity and perception of the school (Section 3.3).

The items in Section A explored passive tolerance towards the six identity markers given in the Citizenship curriculum (see above). Based on the approach taken by Avery (1992) the questions considered whether the students were tolerant of different groups, by asking them whether the specified groups should be granted certain basic human rights (see also Francis, 2001; IEA, 2004). Students were asked to what extent they agreed with a given set of statements, with their answers being given on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree). In order to increase reliability, multiple-item indicators were used for each of the identity markers (De Vaus, 1996). The rights used were based on the UDHR (United Nations, 1948) which underpins the understanding of human rights in the Citizenship curriculum (Kiwani, 2008). These were the right to

1. peaceful assembly
2. work
3. an education
4. freedom of speech
5. freedom of belief
6. to take part in the governance of their country

Two examples of the questions used in this section are given below (all thirteen items are given in Appendix A):

*QA2: Any religious groups should be allowed to set up a place of worship.*

*QA3: People who are homosexual (gay or lesbian) should not be allowed to hold office in local or national government*

The active tolerance questions (Section B) related solely to religious groups. These mainly came from Peskin's (1986) research. Again the students were given statements and were asked to indicate how much they agreed with them using the

same five-point Likert scale. The items in this section related to actions beyond the application of human rights. Some of the statements focused on things which embodied meaning for the religious person such as food, dress and religious festivals. For example

*QB1.3: Pupils should **not** be allowed time off school to attend their religious festivals (e.g. Eid, Divali.)*

Other questions looked at the students' willingness to engage with the Religious Other through increasing their knowledge about the Other. For example

*QB1.2: It is important for all religious believers to try to learn more about the other faiths in the UK today.*

The questionnaire also collected information about the students' backgrounds. The main explanatory variables in this research are related to religious belief, but other characteristics which previous research into tolerance had indicated as being significant, or which had a direct relationship to the identity markers, were also included (discussed further in Chapter 7.3.1.b) The limited knowledge the students had of their parents' occupation and educational levels meant that only the number of books in the home proved a reliable measure of socio-economic status (Janmaat, 2008a). The students were not asked about their sexual orientation as it was felt that this could be considered offensive in some schools. Although higher levels of educational ability have been linked to higher tolerance, it was not possible to control for this as no comparative student level data existed for this within the schools.

The most problematic characteristic to control for was differences in upbringing in terms of whether the students came from a household which allowed discussion or one which was more authoritarian. As discussed (Chapter 2.3.4), research has suggested that certain belief systems have a higher proportion of people who hold dogmatic views (Feagin, 1965; Rokeach and Bonier, 1960). Thus it was decided to use a form of the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale which would provide a measure of this authoritarian tendency. The actual scale used was the twenty-item scale modified for use with secondary school pupils (Figert, 1968; Murray, 1974).

The answers were recorded on a scale of +3 (agree very much) to -3 (disagree very much), with no 0 point.

### **3.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews**

Tolerance is about how you react to a negative emotion and therefore is about a response or an outcome. The person is tolerant of a group and thus responds by affording them the right to protest. However, an identical response may not be the result of tolerance, but may be based on some other reasoning. For example a person may not support the right of a group to protest, on the surface an indication of intolerance, because of some recent event in which violence occurred at a protest; a pragmatic response. If that fear was removed the person would afford the group the right to protest, thus the person cannot really be viewed as being intolerant. Questionnaires do not enable this level of understanding to be gained and therefore it was decided that semi-structured interviews with a limited number of students would also be used to explore tolerance. The semi-structured interview format was appropriate as it allowed for a fixed schedule, which enabled a significant element of direct comparison, and yet the question wording could be modified and made appropriate for the faith group (Flick, 1998). It also allowed for responses to be probed and thus the reasoning behind the response could be explored (Robson, 2002).

Questions were designed which focused on passive and active modes of tolerance. The students' tolerance of those of another faith was explored in both the active and passive tolerance questions (as this group is frequently cited by those who criticise faith schools in relation to tolerance) but questions also related to other named groups. The questions were mainly based on what could be termed moral dilemmas. A scenario was given which the students were asked to comment on, and their reasoning was then explored further. Drawing on the work of Piaget and Kohlberg, this technique has been widely used in developmental psychology to understand children's reasoning in the moral domain (Witenberg, 2007). It has also been adapted to explore attitudes of tolerance (Enright and Lapsley, 1981; Wainryb, Shaw and Maianu, 1998; Witenberg, 2007). The scenarios were based, as far as possible, on real situations of which the students were likely to be aware.



The interview schedule contained two sets of passive tolerance questions. The questions in the first set were constructed so that in answering the scenario the students could make recourse to human rights. The second set explored tolerance of diversity where there was no designated group, but where the focus was on the students' responses to those whose views or behaviour were different to their own in that they contravened something that they saw was prohibited in their faith. As these views were grounded in the student's religious belief this question was only asked to students who expressed a commitment to a faith.

The active tolerance questions were designed so that the students could not easily make recourse to human rights, but could respond by assisting the other group in some way. The questions were adapted to make them relevant to the students. For example in question BII the faith group was changed depending on local circumstances.

More than one question was developed to explore each mode of tolerance so that if a student found it hard to engage with a particular scenario an alternative could be used. It was intended that all students should be asked a question exploring active and passive tolerance and, where appropriate, a question exploring their diversity of views (the student interview schedule is given in Appendix B).

### **3.3 Determining the School Effect: Research Reliability and Validation**

The most problematic part of this research was how to determine what part the school played in producing the differences in tolerance seen between students in the schools. A large quantitative study would have enabled the school effect to be isolated, but this approach was rejected because the formation of attitudes is complex, and it was likely that any explanation would involve a combination of factors. Thus an approach was required which could keep cases whole and would be able to pick up these combinations. Therefore it was decided to concentrate on a few schools and to employ a predominantly qualitative method in this part of the research. This approach allowed the school to be studied as a whole so that aspects of the school could be understood in context (Golafshani, 2003). In addition the research could be flexible, something which was advantageous given the

exploratory nature of this study, where a more fixed design might have meant that important events and people could otherwise have been missed (Robson, 2002).

To determine which aspects of the school impacted on tolerance an in-depth analysis of each school was conducted. This mainly, but not exclusively, looked at the areas previously highlighted whereby the school might impact on tolerance; cognitive sophistication, contact, socialisation and religious identity formation. This in-depth study allowed for hypotheses to be generated which predicted tolerance outcomes. These hypotheses could then be tested against the findings from the analysis of the student responses to the tolerance questions in the questionnaire and interviews. Confirmation of a hypothesis would mean the conclusion could be drawn that the school was impacting on that attitude of tolerance, and indicate which particular aspect of the school was involved. However, the inference should not be made that the school is the sole source of this attitude of tolerance.

A variety of methods were used to gain information about the schools, partly because not all methods could give detail about every part of the school, but more importantly to enable a picture to be built up from different perspectives. The use of multiple sources of evidence which these methods produced allowed for triangulation of the data, which in turn improved the construct validity of the study, a recognised problem with qualitative research (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000; Yin, 1994).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key members of staff within each school. In most cases the interviews were conducted in the third term. As well as exploring general themes they could probe into specific issues which had emerged during the course of the research. Again the semi-structured interview format enabled comparisons to be made, and intentions, views and understandings to be probed as appropriate (Flick, 1998; Robson, 2002). The interview schedules were tailored to the respondent and the school. Between them the SMT and Head of RE interviews were devised to cover the four aspects of the school which are seen to potentially impact on tolerance, given above.

Questions about the students' experience of school and about their religious identity were also included within the student semi-structured interviews and the

questionnaire (see Appendix D). The questions were influenced by those devised by Peskin (1986) in his study on the Bethany Baptist Academy. But those in the questionnaire relating to cognitive sophistication (primarily classroom climate), and to a lesser extent contact, originated from the IEA Civic Education Survey (IEA, 2004; Torney-Purta, 2001). As the IEA questions focused on political ideas it was felt necessary to also include questions of the same style, but specifically relating to alternative religious ideas and views.

Lesson observations were also used in the research; in all cases the researcher assumed a non-participant role. The observations were employed in two phases and in two ways. In the first term pupil shadowing was used in an unstructured way in order to gain a general understanding of the school (Robson, 2002). In the second phase more structured observations focused on the areas where attitudes were most likely to be discussed and imparted, and where religious nurture was likely to be most in evidence, such as RE, Citizenship and PSHEE. Here the focus was on the extent to which discussion was allowed and the way in which the faith, and that of others, was presented. Detailed notes were made during the lesson observations or shortly after, depending on circumstances. More general field notes were also made throughout the time spent in the schools and included my own reflections.

Official school documents, such as policies, syllabuses, websites, inspection reports and prospectuses, were also consulted in order to give another perspective on the school.

### **3.4 The Research Schools**

The exploratory nature of this study meant that schools were chosen on the basis of particular criteria which are discussed in this section. As this was not a random sample of schools the findings apply only to the schools involved in the research and there can be no statistical generalisations to the whole population of faith schools, or even schools of that faith or denomination. However, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, it is possible to make analytical generalisations which allow the conclusions drawn to be tentatively applied to other contexts or situations, such as other schools of that type (Ragin, 1987; Yin, 2003).

The first research question involves a comparison between faith and non-faith schools. The criticisms of faith schools and their ability to promote tolerance tend to categorise all faith schools together, the exception being David Bell's speech on Citizenship (Guardian, 2005c). However, the heterogeneity of faith schools, even amongst schools run by the same faith, is evident after even a brief acquaintance with faith schools (Halstead and McLaughlin, 2005; Rizvi, 2007). In order to capture and explore this variety within the broad category of faith schools it was decided to also compare across different types of faith schools.

One of the main concerns over faith schools and tolerance is connected to the school nurturing a particular religious identity (Guardian, 2006b; Halstead and McLaughlin, 2005). Therefore an important criterion for the faith school became that the school's primary aim was faith nurture. The consequence of this was that the largest group of English faith schools, Anglican schools, as well as some other faith schools such as Quaker schools, were excluded from this research.

The Anglican Church has always seen its role in education as being twofold:

- Christian nurture
- Service to the community (the local, rather than worshipping community).

Historically in the case of Anglican schools these two intentions have always been present, although, the emphasis on one above the other has changed over time (Church of England Archbishops' Council, 2001; Commission on Religious Education in Schools. and Ramsey, 1970). This difference in intention between Anglican schools and those run by some other major faith groups in the UK is illustrated by the discussions which took place in 2005-7 in which the government tried to persuade faiths who ran maintained faith schools to agree that at least 25% of the places in any new faith school should be open, rather than foundation places<sup>9</sup>. The Anglicans agreed to this (BBC News, 2006a), but the Catholic Education Service, Muslim Council of Britain and Board of Deputies of British Jews were less

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<sup>9</sup> Foundation places are those where a religious commitment can be used as a criterion for admission and open places are those open to anyone, usually allocated on the basis of distance from the school.

happy about this proposal (BBC News, 2006b)<sup>10</sup>. It is too simplistic to say that the distinctive Anglican position was solely related to the difference in emphasis over service to the community, but this was clearly a significant differentiating component within the discussion (BBC News, 2006a).

Although it would have been possible to have included Anglican schools within the research, their dual mission was considered to potentially complicate an already complex and under-researched area.

Within this group of faith schools in which the primary aim was faith nurture the schools were chosen to reflect four other factors which can be seen to differentiate between faith schools and which also relate to tolerance.

The first factor was the faith tradition, including denominational differences, which is the most frequently used alternative classification of faith schools. Differences in belief are certainly widely assumed to lead to differences in tolerance (Chapter 2.4).

Another difference, related to faith, was to consider not what is believed, but the nature of belief; the way that a person holds that belief. One way to capture the nature of belief was to compare schools run by faith groups which hold exclusivist beliefs with those who hold inclusivist or even pluralist beliefs. In Chapter 2.4.1 it was seen that exclusivist theology could give rise to lower tolerance.

The next factor was whether the school was independent or state maintained, a distinction which David Bell (Guardian, 2005c) himself made. Independent schools have a wider degree of autonomy particularly regarding the curriculum and admissions. Any detrimental school effect is therefore likely to be more acute in these schools as they are less regulated by the state. In addition faith schools constitute a significant proportion (40%) of independent schools in the UK (DCSF, 2007a), with many of the others having a faith foundation and still retaining a residual link to that faith. In the case of some faiths and denominations almost all the schools operated by that faith are independent. Debates and reports on faith

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<sup>10</sup> The fact that 100% of the places are foundation ones does not mean that these schools are exclusively for children of that faith, only that in their admissions criteria the highest categories are for children of that faith and preference is therefore given to them. Certainly these schools were happy to take children of other faiths and of no faith.

schools invariably focus on maintained schools, with the findings and recommendations being unquestioningly extrapolated to include independent schools. Inclusion of schools from both the independent and state sectors was therefore considered to be sensible.

The final factor to consider was whether the faith is in a minority position within the UK. As was seen from the discussion about Social Identity Theory, group status and the perception of threat are important factors to be considered in the case of tolerance, and perceived group threat in particular is more likely to be an issue in the case of minority faiths.

It was decided that all the faith schools would have faith nurture as a primary aim, but within that they would reflect a range of factors:

- Faith
- Nature of belief (exclusivist/inclusivist)
- Independent/state
- Status of faith (minority/majority)

A number of different schools could have fulfilled these criteria, but practicalities meant that the number of faith schools was limited to four. In his speech David Bell (Guardian, 2005b) specifically mentioned Muslim and Evangelical Christian Schools, and as I had previously conducted research on such schools it was decided that these would be suitable, fulfilling several of the criteria (Everett, 2006). These two school types could only be considered in the independent sector. No suitable Evangelical Christian state school exists in England at present<sup>11</sup>. Both the Muslim state secondary schools were approached on a number of occasions, but neither felt able to participate in the research.

In addition it was decided to include Roman Catholic schools. Partly this was because I had also previously conducted research in Catholic schools (Everett, 2008), but more importantly because they represented the second largest group of faith schools in England and spanned the independent and state sectors.

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<sup>11</sup> The academies run by Emmanuel Schools Trust in the north of England might be considered Evangelical, but were not suitable due to the low percentage of faith adherents.

Although not considered a significant factor, Roman Catholic schools could be seen to provide a contrast to the Evangelical Christian and Muslim schools. The Roman Catholic Church has had a long history of running schools in England and, although controversial, Roman Catholic schools were given state funding from the establishment of the dual system in 1902 (Murphy, 1971), whereas Evangelical Christian and Muslim schools only emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (Ansari, 2000; Baker and Freeman, 2005; Everett, 2006). Moreover similarities have been noted between the Roman Catholic Church's struggle to gain state funding for its schools in the early part of the twentieth century and the situation for Muslim schools today (Hurst, 2000).

The first research question makes a comparison between the attitudes of tolerance displayed by students in faith and non-faith schools, and therefore it was necessary to include non-faith schools within the sample, in order that the comparison could be made and any faith effect determined. Only one of the factors used above to categorise faith schools was applicable to non-faith schools; whether the school was independent or state maintained, and thus it was decided to include two non-faith schools in the research, one independent and one maintained.

Within the research the decision was made to focus on secondary schools (11-16/18) in England<sup>12</sup>, and within that to focus predominantly on Year 10 students. These students had been within the school for a number of years and most students of this age (14-15) would be able to articulate their views in interviews. They are also around the age where the students are beginning to form their own identity as opposed to merely reproducing the opinions of their parents or other significant adults (Bertram-Troost, de Roos and Miedema, 2007). Conducting this research with Year 11 would have interfered with their exam preparation and restricted the amount of time available.

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<sup>12</sup> Issues over access meant that one school was a 13-18 school (Year 9-13).

### 3.5 The Choice of Participants

#### 3.5.1 Choice of schools

As this study is exploratory the intention was to include typical rather than extreme cases in each category (Schofield, 2002). It was important to establish that the school could be widely accepted as belonging to the particular faith tradition I claimed it belonged to; the criteria used are given in Appendix E.

In finding schools to fulfil the faith adherence and independent/state school categories, compromises had to be made on some other variables that it would have been preferable to keep constant. All the schools involved in the research were secondary schools, although some had junior schools and some 6<sup>th</sup> forms. All were co-educational, and all obtained GCSE results above the national and local average. Inspection reports indicated that none of the schools were considered to be failing, or were in Special Measures. But it was not possible to find schools of the same size, with families showing a similar range of socio-economic status, or located in areas with similar degrees and types of diversity. Appendix H shows the school characteristics on a range of indicators.

In this thesis the decision was made that, rather than giving the schools fictional names which might get confusing, the schools would be referred to by a code. The code reflected the school faith (Roman Catholic (RC), Evangelical Christian (EC), Muslim (M) or non-faith (NF)) and whether it was state maintained (S) or independent (I)

Thus the six schools are:

- Roman Catholic Independent      RCI
- Roman Catholic State              RCS
- Evangelical Christian Independent    ECI
- Muslim Independent                  MI
- Non-Faith State                        NFS
- Non-Faith Independent                NFI



### **3.5.2 The Choice of Students**

It was decided that all Year 10 students would be asked to complete the questionnaire and that there would be eight interview participants from each school, four male and four female. This number of interviews would give a good range of views, but be manageable within the fieldwork timeframe. In the event it was only possible to interview six students (two male and four female) in the NFI school. In all the schools, apart from the Evangelical Christian School, the students for interview were suggested by the schools. One concern that this raises is that these students may not reflect the student population as a whole, but it was a practical approach in a large school where some students would not have been able to cope well with the interview environment or where problems might have arisen over gaining parental permission. The schools were all asked to suggest students who were average or above in ability, who would be able to cope in the situation, and, where appropriate, from a range of faiths. In the ECI School I chose the students at random from the year list. Background information on the students who participated in the interviews is given in Appendix F.

### **3.5.3 The Choice of Staff**

The choice of which staff were interviewed within each school partly depended on school organisation, although a member of SMT and the Head of RE were interviewed in each school. Otherwise the schools suggested possible respondents and others were identified by me during my school observations, and usually included staff connected with PSHEE or some aspect of pastoral care, such as the Head of Year 10. Time and availability were limiting factors in the number of interviews it was possible to conduct in each school, and the range of respondents interviewed varied enormously from two in the NFI school to eleven in the RCI school. This difference did affect the depth of understanding that could be gained about each school. (See Appendix F for participants).

### **3.6 Gaining Access and Researching Within the Schools**

The issue of gaining access to schools always seems to be problematic in educational research in England, and always requires that compromises are made, but few problems were encountered (Gilliat-Ray, 2005). After consulting websites of the overarching faith school bodies such as the Association of Muslim Schools (2011), Christian Schools Trust (2009) and the Catholic Independent Schools Conference (2010), and consulting government data and individual school websites, suitable schools were identified. In the two schools where there was potentially least choice, the Evangelical Christian and the Muslim schools, initial contact was made during an early exploratory phase of the research as part of a series of informal discussions with heads of a number of these schools. Once contact had been established permission was sought to return and conduct the research. This method was employed because of the sensitive nature of the research and issues surrounding Islamophobia in particular. Arrangements regarding access were always made directly with the Head in both schools.

In the case of the Roman Catholic state school and both non-faith schools letters were sent to the Heads of the appropriate schools. Once a school had expressed an interest an initial meeting was arranged to discuss the research further, including any ethical issues. In each of the schools the Head delegated the liaison to a senior member of staff, and all access arrangements were made primarily through this designated contact and/or the Head of Year 10. In the case of the RCI school, access was gained directly through the Headmaster who is an acquaintance.

The schools were visited on a number of occasions over the three terms constituting the academic year 2009/2010 with different aspects of the research being covered in each term. The basic research schedule is given in Appendix G. However, the number of visits and what was achieved on each visit varied between the schools, and the schedule was adapted to fit in with each school. Due to the distances involved, research in the RCI school was conducted slightly differently from the others and involved three residential visits (two of four days and one overnight), one in each term.

The questionnaire was designed to take about 20 minutes to complete, which fitted in with the various tutor period arrangements in the schools. The way that the questionnaire was administered varied in order to accommodate the different ways that the schools operated. I administered the questionnaire in the MI and ECI schools, but the size of the RCI, RCS, NFI and NFS schools required that staff members administered them. Although this raises questions about the comparability of the results this was not the only measure of tolerance used, and thus the validity of the findings was not compromised in any significant respect.

All the interviews were conducted by me. The student interviews were designed to last 30 minutes; however, in some cases the time available was reduced (minimum 20 minutes), meaning that fewer areas could be covered. In the RCI school, concerns over Child Protection meant that the interviews were conducted with pairs of students, whereas in the other schools the students were interviewed individually. The staff interviews varied in length, from 20 minutes to one hour, depending on the respondent and the time available, while the SMT and the Head of RE interviews lasted about 45 minutes.

### **3.7 Analysing the Data**

The mixed methods approach taken in this research necessitated a variety of techniques to be employed in the analysis. The analysis is described here in broad terms with more detail being given at the beginning of the relevant analysis chapters.

Apart from two staff interviews, permission had been gained for the interviews to be recorded<sup>13</sup> and therefore the whole of the student interviews and sections of the staff interviews were transcribed by me. The parts of the student interviews relating to their perception of the school and the staff interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4 the main themes were derived to reflect the four mechanisms and ways that the literature indicated that faith schools could potentially impact on their students' attitudes of tolerance. Within each theme some codes were

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<sup>13</sup> In the two cases where this was not possible, detailed notes were made at the time and supplemented after the interview.

determined a priori, whereas others emerged from the data. These codes were also applied to the observation and field notes. The parts of the student interviews exploring their attitudes of tolerance were compared on a question by question basis. NVIVO was used to assist the analysis in the case of the student interviews.

Once the questionnaires were returned to me the data was cleaned, and any scripts which were substantially incomplete were removed. Each script was then given a unique reference number which allowed me to identify the school it came from. Table 3.1 shows the number of completed scripts in each school.

School	Number of Student Questionnaires
RCI	101
RCS	104
ECI	24
MI	44
NFI	85
NFS	143

Table 3.1: Number of completed questionnaires by school.

The responses were coded with the Likert-style questions being coded from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and with appropriate scales being used for the demographic questions. During the analysis some categories were collapsed, for example the 'strongly agree' and 'agree' categories being made into one 'agree' category. The scores for each item in the Rokeach scale were aggregated to give an overall Rokeach score. Various statistical techniques were used to analyse the data which are described in the relevant chapters (5, 6 and 7).

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

Before commencing the research the methodology to be used was submitted to the Institute of Education's Ethics Committee for ethical clearance, in line with the Institute of Education's Research Governance and Ethics Policy

(Institute of Education, 2007). No concerns were raised, nor were any changes requested.

BERA guidelines were followed throughout (BERA, 2004). Tolerance, or potentially labelling a group as less tolerant, was recognised as being a sensitive subject, especially in the present climate and when combined with faith. This meant that certain of the BERA guidelines were particularly relevant in this research. How the issues raised by these guidelines were dealt with will now be briefly discussed.

### **The Right to Withdraw and Voluntary Informed Consent:**

All the schools and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. The schools and all the participants were required to give their written informed consent before participating in the research (how this was managed in the student case is given in the section on Researching with Children, below). As detailed in Section 3.6, a meeting was held with each school in advance of the research in which the nature and dissemination of the research and any ethical issues were discussed. In addition a brief written summary of the intended research was given to each school. In line with BERA guidelines relating to the detrimental effects which could arise from the research the schools were informed of the possibility that the findings would not necessarily present the school in a positive light, and that aspects of the school might be criticised.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research and some of the topics under discussion, such as homosexuality, the schools were given access to the questionnaire and the proposed student interview schedule prior to the start of the relevant stage of the research. No changes were requested by the schools. A brief report focusing on each particular school, taken from the initial findings from the analysis of the questionnaire data, was also given to that school and discussed with a member of SMT, and in some cases, other staff.

Before the start of the questionnaire and interviews, the research, how it would be disseminated, and any ethical issues (including the right to withdraw from the research) were explained briefly to the participants. This was usually done by me, but in a few schools the staff members administering the questionnaire did

this, having been given written instructions detailing what the students should be told. These details were also included on the informed consent forms.

### **Privacy:**

All the schools and participants involved in the research were anonymised. As discussed in Section 3.5.1, the schools were anonymised by referring to them using codes which related to their faith tradition (if any), and whether the school was independent or state maintained. The staff interview respondents were anonymised by referring to them throughout by reference to their role within the school, rather than using a protective-pseudonym. This approach was taken partially again to avoid confusion, as there were a large number of interviewees, but more importantly because the respondent's role within the school was important for understanding and interpreting their response. In the case of the student interview respondents protective pseudonyms were used. The intention was that the students should choose their own preferred pseudonym, but the students struggled with this and so this approach was soon abandoned. Instead I chose the protective-pseudonyms used and in doing so I tried to reflect the students' ethnic, faith and social-class backgrounds.

All the data generated as part of this research were treated as confidential and were stored carefully in a secure location by the researcher.

### **Researching with Children and Disclosure:**

BERA guidelines highlight particular issues which should be considered when the research being conducted involves young people. In line with BERA guidelines and the requirements of the individual schools I had gained CRB clearance for the research, and when I was in the schools I followed any additional procedures operating within the school, such as conducting paired interviews in the RCI school.

Due to the burden that it would place on the schools, and the potential for the sample to become skewed by some societal groups failing to return the consent forms, it was decided that parental consent would not be sought in the case of the questionnaires. Several of the schools did inform parents in advance that this would be taking place. However, rather than leaving informed consent to the school, and

in recognition of the students' own agency, each student was asked to sign a consent form for the questionnaire. Similarly both parental and student informed consent was obtained for those students being interviewed. The issue of maintaining the students' confidentiality was discussed with the students, but they were informed that confidentiality would be broken if they gave any indication that they were being abused.

Finally, care was taken to ensure that the students did not experience any distress or discomfort on account of the research. All the interviews were conducted on school premises, in surroundings which were familiar to them. None of the students showed any distress during the interviews, but had they done so that aspect of the interview or, if necessary the whole interview, would have been terminated and the contact member of staff informed so that appropriate follow-up action could be taken.

### **3.9 My Position as the Researcher**

No researcher approaches a piece of research free from bias and preconceptions, and as these can impact on the way the data are analysed it is important to consider these (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). In the introduction to this thesis I described my own personal connection with this research. I feel that my identity as a Christian and my position of being a board member on the London Diocesan Board for Schools helped me to gain access to some of the faith schools, in that I was not considered to be antagonistic towards them. This did mean that when initially discussing the research with the school I had to be explicit that my faith background would not guarantee that the findings would present them in a positive light.

The faith schools in this research did not reflect my own faith tradition; I am a practising Anglican and therefore I straddled the position of insider and outsider (Colic-Peisker, 2004). Including my own reflections and feelings about the schools in my research notes helped me to stand back and consider the schools from a distance. This was particularly helpful in the case of the Roman Catholic schools as I was more familiar with this environment, having attended a Roman Catholic school and with my own faith tradition being close to this.

Only in the case of the RCI school did I have any personal connection with the school, which clearly raises questions over impartiality. The connection was, however, only slight, through an acquaintance with the Head, and thus my familiarity with the RCI school was no greater than it was with the other schools. However, during my time in the schools I did build up positive relationships with the participants, all of whom were welcoming and generous with their time. This made me want to present these schools and the participants in a positive light, and during the analysis it was necessary for me to stand back and assume the role of researcher. Again my fieldwork reflections helped me to gain a sense of distance.



## **Chapter 4: The School**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins the analysis section of this thesis. There are two main research questions. Broadly the first is: what differences in attitudes of tolerance are there between students in faith and non-faith schools? The second is: what part does the school play in the formation of those attitudes? As has been indicated in the previous chapter, in order to comment on the role of the school, data relating to each school will be analysed with hypotheses being generated which predict the attitudes of tolerance displayed by the students in the various schools. These hypotheses can be tested against the findings from the analysis of the questions exploring the students' attitudes of tolerance (see Chapter 7). Confirmation of a hypothesis will indicate that a particular aspect of the school is involved in the formation of that attitude.

In order that these hypotheses can be generated, this and the next two chapters (5 and 6) will analyse the data about the schools, which were collected from a variety of sources. This chapter focuses on the school itself, drawing mainly upon interviews with staff, lesson observation and, to a lesser extent, school documentation. Chapters 5 and 6 concentrate on the students' perceptions. The hypotheses generated in this chapter are only provisional, but in Chapters 5 and 6, once all the data have been analysed and incorporated, these hypotheses will be given in their final working form.

Most of those who express concerns about the ability of faith schools to promote tolerance categorise schools in a dichotomous manner, as either faith or non-faith. However, throughout this chapter and the following two, the inadequacy of using that categorisation when discussing faith schools and tolerance becomes apparent. The schools will be seen to vary in many ways, however, very little difference is seen between the faith and non-faith schools when considering those aspects which the literature has suggested impact on the students' attitudes of tolerance. One school, the Muslim Independent school does emerge as being different from the others in several respects; differences which are reflected in the

hypotheses. A consequence of this, which is particularly apparent in Chapter 8, is that the emphasis of the discussion in this thesis changes. Up until now the discussion has employed the faith/non-faith categorisation, but this now shifts and instead tends to focus more on the MI school in comparison with the other schools (faith and non-faith) which form a second group.

This chapter begins by discussing the themes used in the analysis of the data in this chapter and in Chapters 5 and 6, before looking at each school in turn. Schools are complex places and thus it is important to understand each school individually, and to frame the analysis within the school's historical, social and cultural context. As the research focus is on faith schools these are discussed first. Within each group the schools are considered in chronological order of foundation.

## **4.2 School Themes**

Although it has been argued here that the schools need to be considered in context, it is also necessary to have a framework by which to consider aspects of the school which could affect their students' attitudes of tolerance. In Chapter 2 education was seen to relate to tolerance in three ways: through facilitating contact with the Other, through increasing the students' cognitive sophistication, and through socialisation into the beliefs, values and norms of society. But I have suggested that faith schools could also affect their students' attitudes of tolerance through the nurture of a religious identity. Thus the mechanisms by which education is seen to impact on tolerance, and theories which relate social identity and tolerance, provide the basis on which the schools have been explored and subsequently analysed, in order that hypotheses relating to the students' attitudes of tolerance could be generated.

The data are analysed by looking at four themes which are based on the three education pathways given above (Contact, Cognitive Sophistication, Socialisation) with the religious identity pathway (Religious Identity) forming the fourth. Owing to the complex nature of attitude formation these four themes are not discrete, and some overlap will be seen to occur; nevertheless they provide a structure for the analysis. The four themes will now be described in more detail. The school as a whole is looked at from both the school's perspective (Chapter 4)

and that of the student (Chapters 5 and 6) and the themes detailed below apply to the data from both perspectives. Where some elements of a theme are more related to a particular perspective, this is indicated in the text.

#### **4.2.1 Contact**

This theme considers the way in which the school impacts on students' attitudes of tolerance through contact with the Other. The Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Vogt, 1997), the theory on which this mechanism is based, maintains that certain forms of contact between groups are beneficial in correcting negative stereotypes and thus increasing tolerance (Chapter 2.5.4). In order to be able to hypothesise about whether the school might be impacting on its students in this way it is necessary to explore:

- How much contact the students have with other groups, which groups they have contact with, and which groups they are segregated from.
- To what extent the school encourages contact (understood as also including knowledge about, as well as direct interaction with) other groups, and what form that contact takes.

#### **4.2.2 Socialisation**

The impact of a school on tolerance through socialisation relates to the message the school is giving to its students (Chapter 2.5.4 and 2.5.5); therefore it is necessary to understand the moral framework of the school. Socialisation into group beliefs, values and norms relates to personality development, and the focus here is on the whole school (Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen, 1973). In contrast, the mechanism of socialisation through the curriculum relates to direct and explicit teaching of particular beliefs, values and norms (Haegel, 1999; Peri, 1999). There is some overlap between this theme and the theme of Religious Identity, both of which are concerned with socialisation into a group's beliefs, values and norms. The Socialisation theme focuses on socialisation into general societal beliefs, values and norms, whereas the Religious Identity theme is solely concerned with socialisation into the religious group. In order to hypothesise on whether the school might be affecting tolerance in this way it is necessary to consider:

- To what extent tolerance and diversity are explicitly and positively endorsed.
- The way in which the Other is portrayed

#### **4.2.3 Cognitive Sophistication**

The extent to which the school develops the students' levels of cognitive sophistication is the focus of this theme. Higher levels of cognitive sophistication are seen to result in increased levels of tolerance (Chapter 2.5.2). Cognitive sophistication may be increased by encouraging debate, critical thinking and reasoning skills (Bobo and Licari, 1989; Zellman and Sears, 1971). In order to hypothesise on whether the school might be detrimentally affecting its students' attitudes by not developing these skills, the data are analysed by exploring:

- The extent to which the students are encouraged to debate, to critically examine beliefs and assumptions, and to challenge authority.
- The extent to which the students are helped to make choices and to develop and express their own ideas and views.

#### **4.2.4 The Religious Identity**

This theme is explored both in this chapter and, from the students' perspective, in Chapter 5. The primary focus here is faith and the formation of the Religious (social) Identity. The analysis draws heavily on Social Identity Theory (Chapter 2.3.7) which maintains that four criteria need to be met in order for inter-group discrimination and bias to occur; these form the basis of the categories by which the data are analysed. Each criterion is briefly recapped below along with the relevant questions which need to be asked of the data.

### **Criterion 1: Identification**

The student must identify with the group and this identity needs to be valued and important and to be frequently used before it can direct action (Herriot, 2007; Hogg, 2006). This is only explored from the students' perspective (Chapter 5).

The questions relating to this criterion are:

- To what extent do the students identify with their faith?
- When, where, and how often is the religious identity used?

### **Criterion 2: The Salience of the Identity**

This criterion is explored in both Chapters 4 and 5. The student must perceive that a group is present in a particular context, and that group must be salient (Herriot, 2007; Hogg, 2006). Salience is increased when the in-group is seen as distinct from the out-group (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). The greater the degree of distinction the higher the likelihood is that intolerance will be shown towards a particular out-group. It is therefore necessary to ask:

- How distinct is the religious identity?
- What in-group and out-group characteristics can be detected?

### **Criterion 3: Which Groups are Relevant**

Bias will only be directed towards those groups which are relevant. In addition to geographical considerations relevance is linked to the degree of security and threat a group perceives in a certain situation. This criterion is explored from both the schools' and the students' perspectives (Chapters 4 and 5). The questions relating to this criterion are:

- In the religious context which groups are comparisons made against?<sup>14</sup>  
(Who are the out-groups?)
- To what extent, and in what way, does the faith group (the in-group) perceive itself to be threatened?

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<sup>14</sup> This aspect overlaps with the Socialisation theme, but here the focus is on the Other in comparison to the religious group.

#### **Criterion 4: The Perceived Social Structure of Inter-Group Relations**

The extent to which the group members see the group as permeable is the final criterion which is again explored from both perspectives. Groups which are seen as impermeable leave their members with no other option than to employ social bias if the group is threatened (Herriot, 2007). The relevant question here then is:

- To what extent is the religious group seen as permeable?

Having discussed the ways in which the data in this and the subsequent two chapters will be analysed, we now proceed to the schools. More details about individual school characteristics and statistics can be found in Appendix H.

#### **4.3 The Roman Catholic Independent School**

The oldest of the faith schools in this sample, the RCI school is a co-educational 13-18 (Years 9-13) Roman Catholic boarding school run by a Benedictine community of monks. Originally a single-sex boys' school, girls were formally admitted into the 6<sup>th</sup> form in 1999 and now the school is fully co-educational with a ratio of about 2:1 boys: girls. The school is primarily a boarding school with over 80% of the pupils boarding<sup>15</sup> and as such is different from the rest of the schools in this research, potentially offering more opportunity for the school to impact on its students' attitude formation. The Benedictine nature of the school gives it a particular character and provides a distinctive approach to life and education<sup>16</sup>. The key elements of Benedictine character are seen by the school to be community, balance, prayer and faith in action<sup>17</sup>.

The school is located in a rural part of England and is set in extensive grounds. There is little cultural, religious or ethnic diversity in the surrounding area and the nearest city, about 25 miles away, is very mono-cultural (Appendix J). The school and monastery are intimately connected, both physically and metaphorically. The Headmaster was a monk from the community, and the SMT,

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<sup>15</sup> Admissions Director (RCI)

<sup>16</sup> Head Teacher (RCI)

<sup>17</sup> RCI website

including the heads of the boarding houses, were all practising Roman Catholics. Other staff came from a variety of faith backgrounds including some with no faith. At the heart of the site is the imposing Abbey Church. The other buildings vary in age from Victorian to modern boarding houses and a large sports complex. This arrangement of buildings with the Abbey at the centre reflects the essence of the school which has faith at its heart.

The facilities offered are impressive, with the school able to provide a broad curriculum and an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, from music and drama to CCF, sports and art. Although catering for students with a wide range of abilities and needs the school was regularly ranked within the top 250 schools in the country, attaining significantly above the national average in GCSE results and on average sending in the region of ten students to Oxbridge each year. All the students, including day pupils, are assigned to a boarding house. These are single sex and generally house between 60 and 70 students.

As will become evident with the other faith schools the history of the school is intimately connected with the religious atmosphere of the time. The school was originally founded in 1802 predominantly by monks who had escaped from persecution in France during the Revolution, and later the school became home to boys from a German Benedictine school which had been suppressed by the Prussian Government. Although Roman Catholics in England at that time were denied places at university and were prevented from holding public office, the religious orders were nevertheless tolerated, unlike in other parts of Europe. The school's primary aim at this time was to educate future members of the religious order, monks and priests. A few boys 'a limited number'<sup>18</sup> from the local gentry, who were not destined for the monastic life, were also admitted.

The school in its present form emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. The catalyst for this change was a serious decline in school numbers due, in part, to fewer boys offering themselves for the monastic life, but the change is also intimately linked to Catholic Modernism<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> School history p.18

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*

The RCI school has historically attracted, and still does attract, the majority of its students from what is commonly referred to as the Roman Catholic aristocracy. This difference in intake is what differentiates the two Roman Catholic schools in this study, but this has resonances beyond just social class factors. By the later nineteenth century these English Roman Catholic families were no longer excluded from leadership roles in the country (Hastings, 1986). Parents now wanted their sons to be educated in a way that would prepare them for those roles and would instil in them qualities of leadership and independence, and a sense of responsibility<sup>20</sup>. While this mode of education was occurring in the English Public School, it was alien to traditional Roman Catholic education, which was about transmission of the faith and preparation for the religious life.

The same period saw the emergence of Catholic Modernism which looked to reinterpret religious teaching in the light of biblical criticism and modern, scientific thinking (Vidler, 1961). Many of the Roman Catholic aristocracy responded positively to this more liberal Catholicism, as did a number of the influential monks at the RCI school, and hence the newly emerging school reflected this (Hastings, 1986). Although the Benedictine tradition, barring a few episodes in its history, has been a community of mission and practical service rather than intellectual rigour, the community recognised the importance of educated staff for teaching the boys in this new style school. Hence teaching brothers were educated to a high level and well-qualified lay staff were also employed<sup>21</sup>.

Catholic Modernism was fairly short-lived, being halted in 1908 with Pius X's *Ne Temere* decree and replaced by Ultramontanism which restricted liberal interpretations of scripture and history. However, Hastings argues that in England the Roman Catholic aristocracy were spared the worst of the purge on account of their considerable social influence.

'Cardinal Bourne knew well enough that the laity would not endure too harsh a clerical rein: they shared too deeply the liberal attitudes of their protestant neighbours' (Hastings, 1986, p. 141).

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*



This somewhat lenient approach towards the aristocracy might indicate why the school was able to maintain a liberal Catholic tradition which even today remains a distinctive aspect of this school.

#### **4.3.1 Contact**

The school admissions policy did not indicate selection on any particular grounds. At the time of the research the school was popular but not oversubscribed, with supply just about meeting demand. The result was that selection was made neither on faith adherence nor on academic ability. The school would only reject a pupil on the latter ground if it was felt that the student's needs could not be adequately met. Nevertheless the school was segregated.

Segregation could be seen to occur on religious grounds despite this not being employed as a criterion for selection. About 80% of the pupils were Roman Catholic with Anglicans the second largest group<sup>22</sup>. The uncompromising and explicit religious stance taken by the school<sup>23</sup> resulted in a strong element of self-selection, and it was assumed that parents unsympathetic to the religious nature of the school would not send their child<sup>24</sup>. This was seen to apply to staff appointments as well<sup>25</sup>. In consequence a diversity of religious views and adherence existed within the school, but this diversity was kept within moderately narrow limits.

The students had very little opportunity for contact with students of other faiths. Other faiths were discussed as part of the Christian Living course, but the KS3 and KS4 RE syllabus solely related to Roman Catholicism.

Although located in a mono-cultural area the school exhibited a higher degree of ethnic diversity than may initially have been assumed, on account of its boarding aspect. Over one third of students were from overseas, mainly Europe, South America and the Far East, and this market was growing<sup>26</sup>. The lack of diversity in the surrounding area and the isolated position of the school meant that,

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<sup>22</sup> Admissions Director (RCI)

<sup>23</sup> Chaplain(RCI)

<sup>24</sup> ibid

<sup>25</sup> Head Teacher (RCI)

<sup>26</sup> Admissions Director (RCI)

unlike the other students in the research, during term time the students' main experience of diversity was that which existed within the school.

The most obvious area of segregation was in terms of the socio-economic status of the students and their families. Fees in the region of £17,000 p.a. for day pupils and £27,000 p.a. for boarding meant that the school was only open to a few in society (Good Schools Guide, 2010). The limited number of bursaries, sometimes in excess of 100% of the fees, has done little to redress the lack of diversity in this area. The school was trying to develop links with inner city schools to increase the amount of contact that its students had with people from a wider variety of socio-economic backgrounds<sup>27</sup>. The students were very aware of this difference and were often reminded of their privileged status<sup>28</sup>. It is possible that doing so actually might have reinforced that identity. An important point to make here is that this segregation on socio-economic grounds cannot be directly related to the religious aspect of the school.

#### **4.3.2 Socialisation**

The school has a very explicit moral framework, the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, and this framework is the authority on which decisions in the school are based. The Rule of St Benedict is also very influential, and was seemingly used in an authoritative way, but on closer inspection it was clear that its use was more in the nature of guidance than authority.

The school actively encouraged the students in activities other than those associated with the faith as can be seen by the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. Various discussion and debating groups provided space for a range of views to be aired and respected<sup>29</sup>. Tolerance of other faiths was evidenced in that provision was made for the local Anglican priest to celebrate communion for the Anglican students and for them to be prepared for confirmation, although this could be seen to be illustrating a passive rather than active mode of tolerance. Firmly rooted in the Benedictine tradition, faith in action,

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<sup>27</sup> Chaplain (RCI)

<sup>28</sup> Chaplain, Head of CT (RCI)

<sup>29</sup> Field note: observation of extra-curricular Philosophy group

service and responsibility towards others were strongly emphasised throughout the school. Many of the students take gap years and there were many and varied opportunities throughout the year for the students to engage in voluntary and charity work<sup>30</sup>. This emphasis on service indicated to the students what was considered as a suitable response to the Other, which indicates active tolerance.

#### 4.3.3 Cognitive Sophistication

Although the school subscribed to an explicit moral framework there was no indication that the students were required to accept the Magisterium. Neither was this framework being presented to the students as a set of rules which had to be followed. Instead the emphasis was on this being a moral framework on which choices could be based. This I think is reflected in the official aim of the school to provide the students 'with a spiritual compass for life' <sup>31</sup>[RCI website]. This phrase emphasises the importance that the school attaches to having a moral framework, but the use of the term 'spiritual compass' leaves the way open for there to be moral frameworks other than one based on Roman Catholic teaching and belief.

The importance of choice, even in respect of matters of faith, could be seen within the school and was probably most evident in the Christian Living course. This course was the school's version of PSHEE and Citizenship, to a large extent covering the topics found in National Curriculum guidance<sup>32</sup>, but doing so from a standpoint reflecting the school's moral framework. Its aim was seen as helping the students to link various aspects of their life, or to help the students to realise that 'life is not compartmentalised'<sup>33</sup>. The course did not refrain from expressing the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on a particular topic and it was presented in an openly confessional manner. In a Year 10 lesson on Lent the student worksheet, which was confidential to the student, asked them 'What is my experience of confession'.<sup>34</sup> However, other options were given; for example, when teaching about contraception, the Head of Health Education, explained that he was definite about

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<sup>30</sup> RCI website, Chaplain(RCI)

<sup>31</sup> It can be seen in other places on the website that spiritual and moral are used interchangeably.

<sup>32</sup> RCI Christian Living Curriculum website and Interview with Head of Christian Living (RCI)

<sup>33</sup> Christian Living Teacher(RCI)

<sup>34</sup> Lesson observation

giving the Roman Catholic line, but also discussed other options, seeing it as negligent not to do so<sup>35</sup>.

The grounding in a moral framework based on Roman Catholic teaching did not mean that the students were required to make decisions from that basis. The course encouraged the students to consider issues they might face, such as drugs and alcohol, and to start thinking about how they would make those choices, and to develop a framework within which to make those choices. There was no prohibition on challenging this moral framework, and passive acceptance of it was discouraged. On the other hand, except for those taking AS/A2 Christian Theology, this was the only moral *framework* presented to the students. No alternative framework was intentionally discussed or actively considered, but it was clear that, in challenging the religious framework, alternatives were in fact encountered.

The school may place a strong emphasis on Roman Catholic teaching and be explicit about its moral framework, but this did not mean that the school restricted debate or critical thinking and reasoning. This was most evident in the approach taken in Christian Theology, but was also seen in Christian Living<sup>36</sup>. Throughout many of the Christian Theology lessons I observed that alternative views and ideas were encouraged<sup>37</sup>; for example in one Christian Theology lesson students discussed the weaknesses of Pope Pius XII's position on the origin of the universe. Any views expressed, including those in line with Roman Catholic teaching, had to stand up to scrutiny and be argued with reference to reason. This emphasis on critical engagement was very much grounded in the liberal Catholic tradition of the school. The importance of encouraging this critical engagement was emphasised by the Head of CT who explained that whilst he felt that the concentration on teaching only one faith had many advantages, he also saw that the lack of religious diversity could be detrimental to the students in developing critical thinking skills, forcing him at times to play devil's advocate<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Head of Health Education(RCI)

<sup>36</sup> Head of CT(RCI)

<sup>37</sup> Lesson observations

<sup>38</sup> Head of CT(RCI)

#### 4.3.4 The Religious Identity

The explicitly faith-related aspects of this school were among the most extensive and comprehensive of all the schools in this research, partly due to the boarding nature of the school. Although the faith aspect of the school was very evident other identities were also promoted through the wide range of non-faith based academic and extra-curricular activities that the students were encouraged to participate in<sup>39</sup>.

During term-time the school effectively became the primary source of the student's religious practice and formation. This intensive environment enabled a degree of continuity in faith formation which was not found in the other schools. However, the school authorities would not see themselves as operating alone, but in partnership with the parents, reinforcing the home beliefs and practices<sup>40</sup>.

In terms of religious practice all students, irrespective of their faith, were required to attend Sunday morning Mass in the Abbey Church and the House Mass during the week, as well as being present at morning and evening House prayers. In addition, all the students participated in two retreats a year, one House-based and one Year-based.

Religious Studies, or Christian Theology (CT) as it is known in the school, was compulsory throughout the school until Year 13. In Year 9 the course was internally devised, but for GCSE the students followed the AQA syllabus taking the modules which concentrated specifically on Roman Catholic teaching<sup>41</sup>. In Years 12 and 13 many students continued with Christian Theology at AS and A level. The course followed was that offered by AQA with the focus on Ethics and Philosophy of Religions. Year 12 students not taking AS were required to take the GCSE short course AQA Ethics and Philosophy of Religions. All students also took a non-examined, internally devised programme on Christian Living, and its associated course on Health Education.

The school also provided non-formal opportunities for the students to explore their faith through Confirmation, student-led Lectio Divina (meditative Bible

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<sup>39</sup> RCI website, Head Teacher, Chaplain(RCI)

<sup>40</sup> Head Teacher(RCI)

<sup>41</sup> The Christian Life and St Mark's Gospel and 'The Effects of the Roman Catholic Tradition upon aspects of Christian Lifestyle and Behaviour'

study) groups (over 200 students attended these), retreats, and religious visits and pilgrimages. These groups were more confessional than the compulsory religious activities as they were catering for those students who wanted to explore their faith further.

Within this school, faith was important and evident, but the religious identity was developed by referring to what they were, and involved little in the way of comparisons with other faiths or belief systems. In-groups and out-groups were not created directly through practice. Apart from receiving communion non-Catholics were never excluded, and many went to the Lectio Divina groups and chaplaincy.

During interviews with various staff in the school the only 'group' to which any comparison was made, and which could be seen in any way as a threat, was secularism<sup>42</sup> which was seen as reflecting a relativistic world view. Despite being referred to directly in interviews it was not portrayed to the students in such an explicit manner. This was most evident in the Christian Living course where the religious framework was foregrounded as an alternative to secularism. Secularism was not portrayed as wholly bad, but rather the course emphasised that there were other valid and worthwhile moral frameworks, specifically Roman Catholicism, from which to make decisions<sup>43</sup>. Roman Catholicism was portrayed as a positive and valid choice, and this could be seen in the way that alumni were celebrated for the positive contribution they had made to the wider society<sup>44</sup>.

Despite focusing on Roman Catholicism the GCSE and A level courses did not require the students to take a confessional stance. In the lessons I observed that some students and teachers did make reference to their own beliefs, but this was never required or expected from the students.<sup>45</sup> Although attendance at services and prayer was mandatory, participation was not, being acknowledged as a matter of conscience. Many of the staff interviewees recognised that within the school people were at different stages in developing their beliefs or along their spiritual

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<sup>42</sup> Head Teacher, Chaplain, Head of Health Education and Christian Living Teacher(RCI)

<sup>43</sup> Head of CT, Head of Health Education(RCI)

<sup>44</sup> For example a section of the website highlighting the lives of seven alumni

<sup>45</sup> Lesson observations

journey and the school needed to respond to them wherever they were<sup>46</sup>. That the students would question their faith was not only accepted, but encouraged and considered in a positive light. Faith was presented as a choice, as permeable, and the students' decision to believe or not was respected by the staff and students.

#### **4.3.5 RCI School Summary**

Faith was a key and prominent part of the RCI school's ethos and being. There was no evidence that the school was failing to develop its students' cognitive skills. Faith was presented as a matter of personal choice, and critical examination of the faith was actively encouraged. Neither was there any indication that the school was promoting negative stereotypes of other groups, and it could be seen to be actively encouraging a positive response towards others through service.

Although the faith aspect of the school was strong, the way that this was presented meant that it was unlikely that social bias would be employed as a way of increasing the group's self-esteem. The religious identity was formed without the use of comparisons and the creation of out-groups. The total coherent environment provided a constant faith presence rather than a direct and explicit reminder of group membership. Faith was presented as a choice, and thus the faith group was seen as permeable. The school did see a threat from secularism, but this was mild, being presented to students as an alternative moral framework rather than a threat. Neither was secularism presented in a form which indicated an out-group towards which bias could be directed.

The school did appear to limit contact towards two groups, those of other faiths, and those of lower socio-economic status. Although the school did not select on grounds of faith, nevertheless there was little religious diversity among the students, and the school provided a limited amount of teaching about other faiths. Neither did it provide any opportunity for the students to interact with members of other faiths. This was linked to the faith aspect of the school as the desire to give the students a good grounding in the Roman Catholic faith meant that other faiths were sidelined. The school was also segregated on socio-economic grounds and,

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<sup>46</sup> Head Teacher, Chaplain, Head of Health Education and Head of CT(RCI)

again, there was little opportunity for the students to have any contact with other socio-economic groups. This situation was a result of the fact that the school is an independent school attracting a certain section of society, rather than it being connected to the faith of the school.

#### **4.4 The Roman Catholic State School**

This co-educational 11-16 Roman Catholic state comprehensive school is situated in inner London. It was not large for a comprehensive, having about 700 pupils. During the period of the research the school was operating on a restricted site as it was being rebuilt under the Building Schools for the Future initiative. The school had limited outdoor facilities, but generally it was operating normally. The school buildings included a small chapel which was connected to the dining room, allowing for expansion to enable a whole Year to attend a service.

The origins of this school offer a stark contrast to the RCI. It is one of a number of Roman Catholic schools that were set up to educate poor Roman Catholic children rather than the sons of the elite. The first wave of such schools was set up at the turn of the twentieth century, but this school was founded in the 1960s by the Diocese, and operated with the assistance of a teaching order, to educate the increasing number of mainly poor Irish Catholic families who had settled into the area<sup>47</sup>.

The staff in the school were predominantly Roman Catholic, although not all were practising. The SMT and the Head of RE are all required to be practising Roman Catholics. Non-Roman Catholics were not in theory excluded from teaching RE, but all of the department were Roman Catholics and this was the preferred situation<sup>48</sup>. There were members of staff of other faiths and the staff reflected a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The majority of the students came from the local neighbourhood which was fairly deprived, although the school did attract students from quite a wide geographical area. Much of the area around the school is social housing and a large proportion of the students came from backgrounds of low socio-economic status.

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<sup>47</sup> RCS website

<sup>48</sup> Head of RE(RCS)



The area which the school serves is predominantly white, but with a sizeable Black African/Caribbean minority of around 25% (Appendix J). The parents saw the school as 'good' and as maintaining firm discipline<sup>49</sup>; and the students regularly gained GCSE results above the national average.

As will become evident, the school's approach, whilst being directed and motivated by faith, was related to the social context of the school and the surrounding area. A major problem which impinged on the school was the generally low expectations of both students and parents<sup>50</sup>. Another was the gang culture and rivalry which was prevalent in the area. This was not a problem within the school itself, but was a very real threat, engendering a feeling of insecurity. Finally, although the area is ethnically mixed, neighbouring areas can be quite segregated with certain parts showing strong support for the BNP<sup>51</sup>.

#### **4.4.1 Contact**

The school was very ethnically and culturally diverse with over one third of its pupils from black African/Afro-Caribbean families, and the school showed a fractionally greater degree of diversity than the surrounding area. Students were therefore regularly interacting with students from a variety of ethnic groups. Staff did comment on playground groupings on ethnic grounds, yet these were seen as weak groupings which did not extend into the classroom<sup>52</sup>. Outside the school there did seem to be more of an issue with segregation, with students being reluctant to enter neighbouring areas and mix with others from that area<sup>53</sup>. This was linked to various gang-related threats<sup>54</sup>.

The students within the school came from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, but many came from quite deprived families and the average socio-economic status of the students was the lowest of all the schools in this research. Nevertheless no segregation was evident on the grounds of socio-economic status.

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<sup>49</sup> Deputy Head, Head of Year 10(RCS)

<sup>50</sup> Head of Year 10(RCS)

<sup>51</sup> British National Party

<sup>52</sup> Deputy Head, Head of Year 10(RCS)

<sup>53</sup> Deputy Head, Head of Year 10(RCS)

<sup>54</sup> Head of Year 10(RCS)

This school was popular and heavily oversubscribed, with the result that it was highly selective with over 90% of its pupils coming from Roman Catholic families. The majority of the remaining places were allocated to children coming from other practising Christian families. The diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds of pupils within the school indicated a greater variation in belief and practice than might be initially assumed, although the range was probably still quite limited.

Within the school the students did not have opportunities to mix with students of other faiths, and formal teaching about other faiths was limited. The main teaching on other faiths occurred in Year 7 when they held a World Religions day at which the students had talks from people of various different faiths. Otherwise the teaching at KS3 focused on Roman Catholicism, but it did actively try to incorporate reference to other faiths when the topic was appropriate, such as briefly discussing Bar Mitzvah in the unit on confirmation<sup>55</sup>. At KS4 the school had chosen to take the Christian rather than Roman Catholic module options. At times it was considered necessary to counteract the ignorance and misconceptions about other faiths held by the students. When this arose the Head of RE said that he would try to stress the unity of all faiths around their belief in God, saying very firmly that 'anything disrespectful we will tackle'<sup>56</sup>. Space was given to other faith interpretations and no comparisons were made in this regard, but the students were still limited in respect of encountering other faiths.

A new initiative within the school was seeking to address some of these inter-faith contact issues. A link was in the process of being established with a slum school and a more elite school in Bangalore, India, with a student trip planned for the coming year<sup>57</sup>. This project was looking to extend and reflect the school's emphasis on charity and the students' responsibility for others which also formed part of the RE and Citizenship curriculum<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Head of RE(RCS)

<sup>56</sup> *ibid*

<sup>57</sup> Deputy Head(RCS)

<sup>58</sup> Lesson observation, Head of RE, Chaplain(RCS)

#### 4.4.2 Socialisation

As in the RCI school the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church provides the moral framework for this school. It motivates and directs the policies and approaches taken within the school. The role of the staff was seen to be essential in transmitting and reflecting this framework, often expressed as 'Gospel Values', to the students. This staff expectation was made explicit at interview and reinforced and revisited throughout the school year. Staff were expected to support and conform to this unified approach within the school context<sup>59</sup>.

Unlike the other faith schools in this research, where the moral framework was presented as a valid and worthwhile alternative to secularism, in this school the task was perceived differently. Here the need was to provide a moral framework in a situation where many of the students were seen to have chaotic lives and ever-changing values<sup>60</sup>. This was not about enforcing a values base where one already existed, but providing one to begin with. The view was that for many of these students the school, and the absolute certainty of its moral framework, provided stability for them.

#### 4.4.3 Cognitive Sophistication

Although conformity was expected of the staff within this school, the students were allowed to challenge authority, including religious authority. This was demonstrated in a lesson which I observed on Oscar Romero<sup>61</sup>. One of the main points of the lesson was the way in which Archbishop Oscar Romero stood up to the higher authorities in the Roman Catholic Church. Whilst not restricting the views that the students could express, there was an insistence on being able to provide a reason for holding that view<sup>62</sup>. The Head of Year 10, who also taught RE, said that one of the ways that they tried to do this was by arranging debates within RE. The students volunteered to defend their position against a member of the RE staff who played devil's advocate<sup>63</sup>. Many of the lessons which I observed (RE and

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<sup>59</sup> Deputy Head(RCS)

<sup>60</sup> Deputy Head, Head of Year 10(RCS)

<sup>61</sup> Lesson observation

<sup>62</sup> Head of Year 10(RCS)

<sup>63</sup> *ibid*

others) involved debate and open discussion with the teachers encouraging the students to develop critical thinking skills<sup>64</sup>.

The influence of the social context can be seen with regard to choice, which was taken very seriously within the school. The school wanted to be seen to respect the students' choices<sup>65</sup> in all areas including religion. It saw itself as providing a choice which was an alternative to the potentially normative destructive one of violence and low expectations<sup>66</sup>. The school tried to promote another, more positive and constructive, identity which the Deputy Head saw as being about having 'inner strength' and the 'moral courage to stand up for what they believe in'<sup>67</sup>. In a practical way this was emphasised through encouraging the students to engage in sport, music, drama and a range of extra-curricular activities. However, there was no separate PSHEE course, with the content being covered in RE and tutor time, which could be seen as limiting the range of choices on everyday issues that the students are exposed to. However, the students did take a short course GCSE in Citizenship in Year 10.

#### **4.4.4 Religious Identity**

Faith and faith formation appeared to be less overt in this school than in some other faith schools. This could be related to two understandings within the school. The first was that the school did not see that they could instil faith into the students, but only reinforce what was started by the parents<sup>68</sup>. The second was that the more pressing need was seen to be in transforming lives and increasing the life chances of their pupils, rather than making the students 'good Catholics'. This need could also be seen to affect the way that threats were perceived. The staff did make comparisons with secularism and in a mild way this was perceived as a threat<sup>69</sup>, but this was not expressed directly to the students. The more acute threat, and thus the

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<sup>64</sup> Lesson observations

<sup>65</sup> Deputy Head, Head of RE, Head of Year 10(RCS)

<sup>66</sup> Deputy Head (RCS)

<sup>67</sup> *ibid*

<sup>68</sup> Head of RE(RCS)

<sup>69</sup> Deputy Head, Head of Year 10(RCS)

one which was more keenly articulated, was related to the gang culture and low expectations, and thus unrelated to the faith aspect of the school<sup>70</sup>.

The religious nature of the school was also somewhat diminished, I felt, by the surroundings. Religious images and posters were evident around the school and in some classrooms. But the positioning of the chapel, tucked away at the side of the dining room, reduced the impact that its presence could have had on the spiritual nature of the school.

RE was compulsory throughout the school. In Years 7 and 8 this was an internally devised course which introduced the students to Catholic teachings and practice, but with a strong emphasis on how this is applied. It was confessional in nature, but did not require the students to make a confessional response. Year 9 and 10 students took the AQA GCSE RE course, studying the modules on St Mark's Gospel and Christianity and Ethics. In Year 11 a short course in OCR Philosophy and Ethics was available for some. RE attempted to fulfil two aims; to enable the students to learn some basic facts about the religion and religious beliefs, and to get them to think about faith. Evangelisation was low on the list of priorities<sup>71</sup>. In teaching the faith no distinctions or negative comparisons were made in respect of other faiths.

Compulsory religious practice was limited within the school and was mainly arranged by the Lay Chaplain. Short prayers were said at the beginning of some lessons, but this depended on the teacher. Sometimes these were pupil-led and followed a set pattern<sup>72</sup>. All the students were expected to stand for these, but although there was no compulsion for the students to participate, few declined<sup>73</sup>. A whole school Mass took place once a year, but otherwise compulsory religious attendance was limited to a Mass in Year 7 when the students joined the school, and a leavers' Mass in Year 11. During Lent each year students participated in a service of reconciliation. This contemplative service ended with the students being given the opportunity to go and talk to a priest, or say a prayer with him. Again

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<sup>70</sup> *ibid*

<sup>71</sup> Head of RE(RCS)

<sup>72</sup> Lesson observations

<sup>73</sup> Lesson observations

there was no compulsion for the students to participate in this way<sup>74</sup>. Assemblies were held once a week per Year group and generally involved a Christian theme and a prayer, and possibly some music<sup>75</sup>.

Faith was always presented to the students as a choice, as discussed above, and therefore could not be seen as impermeable. For those who wanted to explore their faith further there were a variety of informal and non-compulsory religious activities. These included Mass in the chapel once a week, Year retreats<sup>76</sup> and religious-oriented trips to places such as Rome which enabled the students to engage with other Roman Catholic youth from all over the world, and give the students a sense of Roman Catholicism outside the UK<sup>77</sup>.

#### **4.4.5 RCS School Summary**

The expression of faith within this school was less overt than it was in the RCI school, nevertheless it did provide a strong motivating and guiding element, underpinning many aspects of the school. The social needs of the students had changed the emphasis in the school to one in which providing them with a moral basis overrode the aim of faith nurture, although these two aims overlapped considerably.

In this school, faith was presented as permeable and no comparisons were made with other groups. The main threat perceived by the school was related to violence and low expectations, and therefore was unrelated to faith. Roman Catholicism was presented as a moral framework rather than being promoted as an exclusive identity. The school tried to help its students to reject the destructive culture of low expectations and violence by making them aware of the other choices available to them; the development of the students' cognitive skills was part of that process.

The admissions policy of this school, which privileged the students from Roman Catholic families, resulted in this school being segregated on the grounds of faith. Furthermore the school provided few opportunities for the students to

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<sup>74</sup> Field notes: Year 7 Service of Reconciliation

<sup>75</sup> Observation, Chaplain(RCS)

<sup>76</sup> Chaplain(RCS)

<sup>77</sup> Head of Year10(RCS)

interact with people of other faiths. These factors, combined with the concentration of RE teaching on Christianity, meant that the students had little contact with the Religious Other.

#### **4.5 The Evangelical Christian School**

Situated in a medium-sized Home Counties commuter town, this independent, co-educational day school caters for children from 4 to 16 (Reception to Year 11) on one site. It was established by one particular church in the 1980s and is part of a new breed of Christian schools which began emerging in the UK in the 1960s (See Baker and Freeman, 2005; Everett, 2006). The school had about 300 students and usually had one class per year group.

At the time of the research the school was housed in purpose built accommodation, but during the year of my research the school acquired new premises adjacent to the original site which the senior school moved into in September 2010. The original site was just large enough for the current school population, and facilities included a science lab, ICT room, art room, music room and limited outdoor space.

The size of the school and the availability of appropriate staff within the congregation did place some restrictions on the curriculum. All the staff were members of the church community, with many working on a voluntary basis; some, but not all, had a PGCE qualification. Nevertheless the school was able to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. The students gained GCSE results above the national average and, after leaving, the majority of the students continued their studies at one of the local 6<sup>th</sup> form colleges, with many continuing on to university.

The key to understanding this school lies in two facets of its life; the motivation behind the school and its relationship with the church. It is the degree of overlap and continuity between home, school and church which makes this school unique amongst the research schools.

This school represents an 'extreme' example of Evangelical Christian schools in that all its students came from one church rather than from a number of different churches sharing similar religious understandings. The church itself has six different congregations which have some autonomy, but which are part of one

overarching community church structure. The school served all the six congregations, and only students from families attending the church were eligible for admission. This was partly a logistical issue of space, but more importantly it reflected the motivation behind the school; helping the parents to fulfil their God-given role of educating their children.

The biblical requirement that parents are responsible for their children's education is felt strongly, not only in this school<sup>78</sup> but throughout the Evangelical Christian school movement (Freeman, 2001; Pazmino, 2008). The school and its staff are seen by all as being 'delegated shepherds' (Hollow, 2006) there to assist the parents in their God-given task, and therefore they should reflect the parents' wishes in all matters<sup>79</sup>. This particular understanding of the parental role also means that the school could expect involvement from the parents, such as the expectation that parents with children in the first few Years would help in the classroom for at least half a day a week. The environment this school aimed to create avoided the dichotomy in values which is perceived to exist between home and school when the child attends a non-faith school.

#### **4.5.1 Contact**

The locality of the school has a greater ethnic diversity than England as a whole (Appendix J), but is still predominantly white. Nevertheless the proximity of the school to London meant that the students were likely to encounter ethnic diversity in their daily lives on a regular basis. The school was slightly less ethnically diverse than other schools in the area, but not significantly so, and the school did have students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

Segregation on socio-economic grounds was minimal, as fees were kept deliberately low in order to allow any member of the congregation access to the school. Running costs were reduced by many of the staff volunteering their time. Additional funds were raised through donations from church members and, as the school was considered to be an integral part of the church structure, a portion of the church's income was used to support the school.

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<sup>78</sup> ECI website

<sup>79</sup> Head Teacher (ECI)



The school did not select on academic grounds, but did on faith grounds, and was the most restrictive of the research schools in this regard, as only the children of church members were able to attend. The students had little exposure to other faiths within the school. In the formal curriculum, references to, and teaching about, other faiths were limited, although the students did study comparative religions in Year 9 Biblical Studies<sup>80</sup>. At KS4 the course was solely related to Christianity. There were no opportunities for the students to meet with those of other faiths within the school<sup>81</sup>, and even in the wider church context this contact was limited, as the church was involved in a limited number of ecumenical and inter-faith projects. Although the Head stressed that members of the church held a surprising variety of religious views, the students were not exposed to a wide range of religious views or practice. This was reinforced by the fact that the school staff were all from the same church.

However, the school did encourage the students to encounter the Other, including the Religious Other. This was connected to what the Head saw as the main aim of the school<sup>82</sup>, that of instilling a sense of service into the students. Service to others was considered to be an important expression of their faith. During their time in the school all the students were strongly encouraged to participate in some form of overseas service, through links which the church had to projects overseas. On these trips the students undertook practical activities, rather than evangelism, and were encouraged to interact with those of different faiths and a variety of backgrounds. Despite the limited contact and teaching the students did in fact have very practical experience of the Other, although I question to what extent this was then applied to other, more local, contexts.

#### **4.5.2 Socialisation**

The moral framework resulting from the Christian beliefs held by the church was clearly expressed within the school. The ultimate authority was seen to be scriptural revelation, but the church itself has its own statement of faith and values,

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<sup>80</sup> Head of RE(ECI)

<sup>81</sup> *ibid*

<sup>82</sup> Head Teacher(ECI)

which is the working document from which decisions are made. Around this statement of faith and values there was seen to be a wide variety of interpretations, and this diversity of views was considered creative and positive<sup>83</sup>.

Faith was very evident within the school, but other identities were celebrated and encouraged, even if the school did not have the facilities to actively assist them within school. On one of my visits a school ski trip was about to depart, and drama productions and sports matches against local schools were regular fixtures. The way in which the school approached and understood the Other and endorsed a positive view of diversity, and the way that this was rooted in their Christian belief, is illustrated by the following observations about the school's beliefs. The first is that service to others is important because we are all made in God's image. The consequence of this is that all are worthy of our respect and are our responsibility<sup>84</sup>. The second became apparent in an assembly. The leader of the assembly was talking about a paraplegic man and emphasised that this disability was not God's mistake, or a punishment, but part of God's plan. Difference and diversity here can therefore be seen as enriching, and, in showing God's greatness and plan, are something that should be celebrated.

#### **4.5.3 Cognitive Sophistication**

The statement of values which underpins the school allowed for new inspiration from the Holy Spirit, so there could be new interpretations and discernment<sup>85</sup>. Biblical criticism and learning to study the Bible, in order to be able to interpret God's message, was seen as an important skill to develop. Debate and discussion about biblical interpretation was an integral part of church life.

This approach was reflected within the school where students were able to question and challenge the faith, as was frequently observed during my time there<sup>86</sup>. The students were able to criticise, but the academic rigour with which this was approached was not as developed as it was in some of the schools. The purpose of encouraging the students to challenge their assumed belief was

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<sup>83</sup> Head Teacher(ECI)

<sup>84</sup> Lesson observation

<sup>85</sup> ECI website

<sup>86</sup> Lesson observation, Head Teacher, Head of RE(ECI)

primarily to enable them to be able to stand up and defend their faith<sup>87</sup>. Despite this being considered important for the students to learn, it was only formally encountered at GCSE, which was optional, and it was believed that the students would be able to gain these skills from other areas of church life, such as the youth provision<sup>88</sup>. In RE at KS4 the students were encouraged to consider their faith and why they believed what they did. It was intended that the course should be taught in such a way as to allow the students the freedom to come to their own decision. The teacher explained that once they had come to a decision on a particular aspect she might challenge them from her own standpoint<sup>89</sup>, but there was no sense of playing devil's advocate here, to the extent that there was in some other schools.

Choice was considered very important throughout the school and this faith group's interpretation of Christianity emphasises a person's individual relationship with Jesus Christ. But here we seemingly find a tension within the school. The school was founded to counteract what the church and the parents saw (and continue to see) as the prevailing moral climate in state schools of secularism and humanism (Hollow, 2006). The mode of doing this was to instil a particular moral framework, a Christian world view, into the children, something which was very evident in the aim of the KS3 RE course. But at the same time they were saying that one's faith is only truly valid if one has made a personal choice to accept Jesus as one's personal Lord and Saviour.

Aspects of choice were more evident within the Life Choices course, which broadly covered topics found in the non-statutory programme of study for PSHEE and the Citizenship guidance (QCA, 2008a; QCA, 2008b; QCDA, 2010). As well as providing the students with what was seen as the necessary information required for them to make choices in their everyday life, the course also aimed to help develop the skills required for making those choices. The Head of Life Choices talked about helping the students by showing them 'the options in their choices' so that they 'don't have to be stuck with what they think at the moment is their only

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<sup>87</sup> Head of RE(ECI)

<sup>88</sup> *ibid*

<sup>89</sup> *ibid*

choice<sup>90</sup>. During the lessons the students were encouraged to express their own views, whilst at the same time developing skills which enabled discussion and debate<sup>91</sup>. On occasions the teacher did express her own view, but more often she tried to provide a variety of examples which presented opposing or alternative ones<sup>92</sup>. In her interview she was keen to emphasise the importance of not being judgemental, saying that she tried to 'teach those who have chosen the Christian way that you can't be judgemental of those who have not'<sup>93</sup>. Although this course was rooted in a Christian moral framework this was not made explicit to the students during the lessons, and this allowed space, and I think it is fair to say intentionally allowed space, for the students to use other moral frameworks from which to make decisions and choices. Nevertheless no other moral frameworks were explicitly given or referred to.

#### **4.5.4 Religious Identity**

The striking aspect of faith in this school was how minimal the formal, organised, development of faith was. To some extent this reflected the fact that the school is only one part of the faith community. The main role of the school was to fulfil the legal obligation of educating children from the church community, but within a Christian environment. Other provision existed within the church which was seen to more effectively and efficiently develop the children's faith, specifically the extensive youth provision<sup>94</sup>. Faith, though, infused everyday conversations and understandings. This was particularly evident amongst the staff who would regularly refer to scripture, prayer or their own belief in casual conversation and within the classroom. A time for prayer was not formally built into lessons, but on more than one occasion during my observations something came up in the class which the students were encouraged to pray about there and then.

At KS3 the formal religious input involved the students undertaking a course in biblical studies. This was internally devised with the aim of establishing a

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<sup>90</sup> Head of Life Choices(ECI)

<sup>91</sup> Lesson observation

<sup>92</sup> Lesson observations

<sup>93</sup> Head of Life Choices(ECI)

<sup>94</sup> Head of RE, Youth Worker(ECI)

Christian world view in the pupils<sup>95</sup>. Although presented in a confessional way it was hard to determine to what extent the students were required to make confessional responses. RE GCSE (AQA) was optional at KS4 with only four Year 10 students opting for this course. There was no other religious education at KS4<sup>96</sup>.

Formal practical expressions of religion were limited. Assemblies were held two or three times a week. Once a week these were prepared by the students, but otherwise they were led by staff. They lasted about 20 minutes and included a Bible reading, prayer, worship songs and a presentation. Informal worship and prayer might also occur at other times within the school; for example in one class a covering teacher started the lesson by asking the children to pray for their regular teacher who had had a serious accident<sup>97</sup>.

The concentration on Christianity to the exclusion of other faiths meant that the students' religious identity was not being forged by comparison with other faiths and groups, which therefore were not portrayed as an out-group.

The understanding that faith is a matter of choice has already been discussed, but this choice was also emphasised during the student's time at the school. Before entering, and at certain points during their time at the school (such as entering senior school or starting KS4) the parents, in the case of the younger students, and the students themselves when they were older, were interviewed and asked to reaffirm their commitment to the school statement of faith. This illustrates that the school saw faith as a choice and as permeable. To what extent the students felt that they were in a position to decline to commit, given the implications for their education, is of course an issue.

Although this school does in part see itself as protecting its pupils from what is perceived as the malign secularist or humanist influences that exist in non-faith schools, in this school protection was neither perceived as being equated with segregation, nor was it conceived as permanent. Many of the students took part in non-church related out of school activities such as football<sup>98</sup>, and it was clear that

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<sup>95</sup> Head of RE(ECI)

<sup>96</sup> AQA RE St Marks Gospel and Christian Ethics modules

<sup>97</sup> Lesson observation

<sup>98</sup> Head Teacher, Head of RE(ECI)

the parents and staff wanted the students to be prepared for going out into the world and participating in society.

Salt and Light Ministries (Salt and Light, 2010), to which the church is affiliated, sees its major aim in Christian education as being a battle for the minds of its children, and it frequently uses metaphors related to warfare which are quite triumphalist. The church does see itself as engaging in a mission against secularism and humanism, but one where it will assuredly ultimately triumph and it certainly does not see itself as a beleaguered minority. Whilst I did not encounter this image of a 'battle' against secularism within the school, other aspects of the church may promote this image which portrays secularism and humanism as a threat.

#### **4.5.5 ECI School Summary**

The extremely close relationship between school and church in this case means that it is particularly difficult to separate their effects.

The school rarely explicitly promoted its religious identity, nor did it emphasise its distinctiveness through judgemental comparisons with other faiths, and no significant threats to the identity were given. Instead faith was a constant presence within the school, which provided continuity with home and church. Individual choice was an essential part of this faith, which the school endorsed. But there was a tension here in the requirement on students to renew their acceptance of the statement of faith throughout their schooling. This was in no way forced, but the consequences of not signing would have involved leaving the school, which raises questions over to what extent the students could really see their faith as permeable.

The school did not discourage the students from questioning and challenging the norms of the group, or critically examining their faith. Whilst KS3 RE did not intentionally work to improve these skills they were encouraged in the Life Skills course. This course could also be seen as promoting choice and trying to give the students the skills to make these choices. The school could also be seen as positively endorsing diversity; a view directly connected to its beliefs.

The amount of contact with those of other faiths that the school provided for its students was quite limited. Here, as in the two Roman Catholic schools, there

was a low degree of instruction about other faiths, and the school provided no opportunities for its students to interact with those of other faiths. Although the Head did stress that there were variations in belief between church members, nevertheless this school showed the lowest degree of religious diversity of all the research schools. As all students came from one church they were not encountering other faiths, even at a superficial level, within their daily school experience.

#### **4.6 The Muslim School**

The Muslim school is situated in inner London and is an 11-16 school educating both sexes, but where the pupils are strictly segregated by gender. The school had about 250 pupils with about one class of 25 pupils per year group per gender.

The motivation for the school came from the desire of various sectors of the local Muslim community for their children to be educated in an Islamic environment, as opposed to one dominated by secularism, which was perceived as having detrimental effects on the well-being and achievement of Muslim children<sup>99</sup>. The school was started in 1993 as a primary school and grew to incorporate a secondary school. In 2004 the primary section became Voluntary Aided and effectively separated from the secondary school, although strong links are still maintained between the schools with a number of pupils transferring to the secondary school each year.

All the Muslim students and staff associated with the school were Sunni Muslim, but the school would not classify itself in this way. The school and the associated mosque all subscribed to the Hanafi school of Islamic Law (*madhhab*), and this was the understanding which was taught, although not all students followed this school. The Hanafi school is considered the most liberal of the four schools (as opposed to Maliki, Shafi or Hanbali), allowing the use of informed opinion (*ra'y*), reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*) and preferential judgement (*istihsan*) (Adamec, 2007).

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<sup>99</sup> MI school prospectus

There was an institutional link between the school and the local mosque, with one of the imams teaching RE within the school, but students were not solely drawn from its membership. The school featured in a 2009 UK television documentary where questions were asked about the relationship between the school and the mosque around the issue of extremist teaching.

The school was housed in a converted cinema, which resulted in there being a complex arrangement of rooms over a number of floors, and no outside space. The main hall also served as the prayer hall of the mosque and was used as such by the local community. The girls inhabited the left-hand side of the building and the boys the right, using separate entrances. There were a few areas of the school which were used by both sexes, but never at the same time. To ensure minimal contact between male and female students, the school day and timetable were staggered, with the girls starting and finishing thirty minutes earlier than the boys.

The curriculum available in the school reflected the lack of resources, facilities and expertise within the school. It covered English, Maths, Science (but with no labs), Islamic Studies, Arabic, PSHE, Humanities, Art, PE (restricted due to space) and Urdu. The results gained by the students were above the national average and generally students moved on from the school to local colleges or school 6<sup>th</sup> forms. The school regularly took the students on museum, theatre and other educational trips during the school day, but after-school activities were limited.

The school is situated in an area of London which is predominantly white, but with about 10% Asian and 10% Black (Appendix J), although its pupils are drawn from a wider geographical area. The ethnic mix was very diverse, with the largest group having links to South Asia, but with many coming from Somalia and North Africa, and a few from the Middle East (though not Saudi Arabia or the Gulf). As with the RCS school there was a high incidence of gangs, and related knife and gun crime in the area local to the school.

The day-to-day running of the school was directed by the Head, but the founder and governing body had a significant role and this relationship was a cause of friction. Apart from one teacher, the staff were all Muslims, from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. All the Muslim female staff were expected to wear full



length Islamic dress. Some staff had recognised English teaching qualifications, with others having qualifications from their country of origin, but some had none. Most staff taught in both the girls' and the boys' sections.

#### 4.6.1 Contact

The school was not selective on academic grounds and catered for a wide range of abilities. It was ethnically diverse, not catering for one particular ethnic group, as some Muslim schools do<sup>100</sup>. The most obvious ethnic group absent from the school was white British. Nevertheless the students did have contact and interacted with students from other ethnic groups in their everyday life.

Although this was an independent school the intention was that fees should be affordable for the majority of local Muslim families. In addition to fee income the running costs of the school were met from donations from various sources. Segregation was not evident on socio-economic grounds<sup>101</sup> with the students coming from a diverse range of backgrounds in terms of income, occupation and parental educational levels.

Gender was a further point of segregation, and this was very evident, with the insistence on no contact. This lack of contact was not created by the school, but reflected the rules governing gender segregation within some interpretations of Islam (Muslim Council of Britain, 2007). Although some would see this segregation as having a negative impact on the education of Muslim girls (Sarah, Scott and Spender, 1988), others would argue that it is beneficial as it provides a more 'girl centred education' (Haw, 1994, p. 46) and provides an environment in which the girls are not subjected to sexual harassment from the boys in the class (Halstead, 1991). Although contact was restricted the curriculum did discuss gender issues and so knowledge was not restricted<sup>102</sup>.

The school did segregate on the grounds of faith. All the students at this school were Muslim and although applications would have been considered from non-Muslims no provision would be made to accommodate them. A few Shi'a

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<sup>100</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

<sup>101</sup> ibid

<sup>102</sup> Lesson observations

students had attended in the past<sup>103</sup>, and the school was happy to have students from this sect and from any of the schools of Islamic law (*Madhhab*).

Islam was privileged within the school and little reference was made to other faiths. The religious component of the KS3 curriculum was Islamic Studies. In Year 10 and 11 the Islamic Studies course was continued, but in addition GCSE RE was taken and this course again focused solely on Islam. Posters made by the students indicated that other religions had been studied on the girls' side at some point, but this was not part of the RE curriculum<sup>104</sup> and was not referred to in any interviews. The RE teacher was dismissive of the idea of teaching about other religions<sup>105</sup>. Others within the school felt that it was appropriate and recently the girls had been given a talk by a Jewish lady, although this was organised through the PSHE/Tutor time curriculum rather than through RE<sup>106</sup>.

The school provided no opportunity for the students to interact with those of other faiths, although it was hoped that this would form part of the new PSHE curriculum<sup>107</sup>. The school did not engage in competitive sports with local schools, and links through the debating society tended to be with other Muslim schools. The opportunity for students to interact with others outside school was more problematic for the girls due to the strict gender segregation insisted upon by some families. The school did support various charities and was setting up links with elderly members of the local community to establish a sewing project<sup>108</sup>. But it could be seen that the majority, if not all, of the contact was with other Muslim groups.

The opportunity for students in this school to have any contact with other faiths, either through interaction, or learning about others was very restricted. The issue of engagement with other faiths appeared to be part of a much wider tension within the school which will be returned to later in this section.

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<sup>103</sup> IS Teacher(MI)

<sup>104</sup> Field Notes

<sup>105</sup> Imam

<sup>106</sup> PSHEE Coordinator(MI)

<sup>107</sup> *ibid*

<sup>108</sup> *ibid*

#### 4.6.2 Socialisation

The Muslim school would see its moral framework as emanating from the Qur'an which is considered by most Muslims as revealed truth and even as coterminous with God (Ruthven, 2007). The Hadith and the Sunnah are also considered sources of authority, but are subordinate to the Qur'an. The use of this moral framework within the school was evident. Rules were constructed in accordance with Islam, informing areas such as dress, segregation and prohibition of certain curriculum subjects such as music. But beyond these rules it was less evident how Islam informed the education, particularly how it influenced policy. The Head himself referred to this when talking about staff not understanding what it was to be an Islamic teacher<sup>109</sup>.

One area in which the school might be seen as creating an Other, was in the area of ethnicity. The majority of staff and students in the school had close family ties to other countries, and there were indications that Britain and being British was being created as an Other. During lesson observations the UK was portrayed as the Other, with the use of phrases such as 'at home'<sup>110</sup> where home did not mean the UK, and the emphasis in one lesson on something being the law *in the UK*<sup>111</sup>. It should be stressed that this was in no way universal throughout the school, but where this was linked with Muslim identity, as it was in one case, it could be seen as subtly reinforcing the separation between the UK and Islam, rather than promoting a British Muslim identity. In a school with students and staff from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds a staff member using the phrase 'at home' could also be normalising certain countries of origin as the in-group within the school.

The approach of the school towards diversity was complex. References to other faiths and groups in society never gave any indication that they should not be respected or tolerated. Some staff in the school were keen to give the students a wide range of experiences. However, as was seen when discussing choice, the view that Islam is the only true religion did mean that discussion about other faiths could be seen as pointless. In addition, as will be discussed more thoroughly in the next

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<sup>109</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

<sup>110</sup> Lesson observation

<sup>111</sup> Lesson observation

section, there were some within the school for whom segregation from wider society was seen as necessary. Therefore, although the school was not giving negative messages about diversity it could be viewed as giving confused and mixed messages.

#### 4.6.3 Cognitive Sophistication

The authority of Islam seemed to be presented within the school in a rule-based manner. Challenges to the moral framework and Islamic teachings were not countenanced and were seen as dangerous for the student's spiritual life<sup>112</sup>. The Islamic Studies teacher praised students who passively accepted Islamic teaching, saying that 'they don't dispute, they take everything nicely'<sup>113</sup>. Disagreement and questioning were equated with confusion and lack of understanding which needed to be remedied with more explicit instruction<sup>114</sup>. The Islamic Studies teacher explained that in Islamic Studies 'you are supposed to say "Miss I don't understand this", you don't say "I don't agree, I don't believe"'<sup>115</sup>. Within the school discussion of religion was therefore seen as problematic. Islamic Studies lessons permitted questions for clarification<sup>116</sup>, but there was no opportunity for critical engagement with the material. Teaching was didactic, with knowledge being seen as fixed, and as there to be imparted<sup>117</sup>. There was also a sense in which the teaching was about correction, particularly regarding understandings related to what were considered as locally derived interpretations of Islam (*bidah*).

A limited amount of discussion regarding the practical application of the faith could be entered into<sup>118</sup>. Discussion and debate about doctrinal matters could not be countenanced, and there was no discussion of different textual interpretations, and little discussion of variations in practice before the final year. It was seen that questioning on this level might lead a student to say something indicating that they had rejected their faith. The Islamic Studies teacher saw a fine

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<sup>112</sup> PSHEE Coordinator(MI)

<sup>113</sup> *ibid*

<sup>114</sup> *ibid*

<sup>115</sup> *ibid*

<sup>116</sup> Lesson observation

<sup>117</sup> Lesson observation

<sup>118</sup> IS Teacher(MI)

line between saying you don't agree or believe, and getting to a position where a person was taken 'out of Islam because you are denying Allah'<sup>119</sup>.

Within other curriculum subjects debate, discussion and reasoning were used<sup>120</sup>; for example in a Year 10 English Literature lesson the students were encouraged to discuss and debate why a character had acted in the way he had. However, in RE (as opposed to Islamic Studies) the approach was inconsistent. Sometimes the teacher presumed to state what the students believed as Muslims, for example saying that 'as Muslims we believe life is sacred to Allah'<sup>121</sup>. Later, however, he asked students to give their own opinion about euthanasia for someone in a vegetative state, something which related to the sanctity of life. This inconsistency in style and approach may have been due in part to problems with staffing. The school employed a number of teachers whose educational and teaching backgrounds were outside the UK. Differences in pedagogy and cultural understandings relating to child-raising meant that some of these teachers were less familiar with employing child-centred educational methods,<sup>122</sup> instead relying on didactic modes of teaching which reduced critical engagement. The school was aware of this issue and was working to address it.

The extent to which individual choice could be promoted seemed to be contested within the school. The Head said that religion was not a matter of choice<sup>123</sup>. Here he was not quite meaning that religion should be imposed, but that there was only one true religion, Islam. This in theory could render discussion of any other belief system or moral framework futile. Thus the school did not expose students to other moral frameworks, a situation exacerbated by the notional homogeneity of students in terms of belief, and the school's insistence on conformity of belief. But the Head, along with a number of other staff in the school, took the view that the education they were providing should enable the students to make choices about their lives<sup>124</sup>. On the other hand the desire to maintain the students within the faith, where the line between being a believer and being an

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<sup>119</sup> *ibid*

<sup>120</sup> Lesson observation

<sup>121</sup> RS Teacher(MI)

<sup>122</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

<sup>123</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

<sup>124</sup> Head Teacher, PSHEE Coordinator(MI)

apostate was seen by some as fine, dictated that certain limits were imposed and choices were limited.

In addition the choices the students could be allowed to make were within a limited range, defined by the Muslim community, and within which bounds the school had to be seen to operate<sup>125</sup>. The positive image of the local Muslim community had to be maintained, and this impacted on the school by restricting choices available to the school and consequently the students. Maintaining a positive image of the community overrode any personal autonomy that one might exercise. This image related to how the community was perceived by other Muslims, rather than the wider local community. The focus was on Islamic purity and conformity, and seemed to impact predominantly in the area of behaviour, and issues around gender segregation and the need to maintain the girls' purity<sup>126</sup>. But it also impacted subtly in other areas such as the choice of curriculum subjects and extra-curricular activities<sup>127</sup>. Ultimately the school could not be seen to be doing anything which might undermine the image of the community.

#### **4.6.4 The Religious Identity**

The importance placed on the religious identity and its formation in this school was the strongest and most extensive of all the schools in this research.

The aim of this school was to produce a 'good Muslim'<sup>128</sup>, an aim which was clearer in terms of the faith intention here than it was in any of the other schools. What constituted a good Muslim, the possibility of achieving this, and the manner in which it should be achieved, were all contested within the school<sup>129</sup>. Common to all understandings of a 'good Muslim' were elements of strong faith and practice. Those directly involved with the students saw the task as complex, with this complexity stemming from many different factors, such as inter-generational issues, and issues around Islam and modernity<sup>130</sup>. In contrast many on the governing body were perceived to be working from an idealised version of Islam,

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<sup>125</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

<sup>126</sup> ibid

<sup>127</sup> PSHEE Coordinator(MI)

<sup>128</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

<sup>129</sup> ibid

<sup>130</sup> ibid

seeing the Muslim child as quiet and hard-working, rather than facing the reality that these students were 'normal inner London kids'<sup>131</sup>. Their belief was that 'Islam' could be imposed onto the students and resistance should be met with stronger imposition<sup>132</sup>.

Reflecting the cultural origins of the founder and mosque leaders, the girls did not attend the mosque, even for Friday prayers (*jum'a*), but instead prayed in the classroom. The boys were required to perform any of the five daily prayers (*salah*) which fell within the school day collectively, and to attend Friday prayers. At times this necessitated changing lesson times, and school holidays were also adjusted to incorporate Muslim festivals<sup>133</sup>.

All students studied Islamic Studies. In Years 7-9 this contained a number of different components including doctrine (*Tahweed*), Qur'anic recitation and memorisation (*Hifz*), Islamic history (*Tarikhi*), jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), moral values (*Akhlaaq*), prayers (*du'a*) and etiquette<sup>134</sup>. Elements of each of these were studied in each Year and about 20% of curriculum time was devoted to this subject at KS3. Islamic Studies at KS4 constituted about one hour a week, following the same pattern as the KS3 course; in addition students took GCSE RE, studying only the modules on Islam<sup>135</sup>.

The faith within the school concentrated on Islam and was taught with no reference or comparison to any other faith. The only place where distinction and difference did emerge was related to differences within Islam. As has been explained the school followed the Hanafi school of Islamic law. Although they would see the Hanafi school as having a great degree in common with the other three schools of Islamic thought, nevertheless only one interpretation was allowed, and conformity was insisted upon within the school<sup>136</sup>. This insistence on conformity emphasises a distinction between this group (Hanafi) and other Muslims through correct practice, which can allow for the creation of an Other. For example

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<sup>131</sup> ibid

<sup>132</sup> ibid

<sup>133</sup> Field notes

<sup>134</sup> MI school prospectus, IS Teacher(MI)

<sup>135</sup> Imam

<sup>136</sup> IS Teacher(MI)

one member of staff was not allowed to lead prayers because of the way he performed the ritual washing before the daily prayers (*wudhu*)<sup>137138</sup>.

All aspects of faith within the school were approached in a confessional manner. The GCSE course did require the students to incorporate other positions and opinions into their answers, but the course was still taught from a confessional position with the students rarely veering from that<sup>139</sup>. The assumption within the school was that all the students were believers, no other position was countenanced, and there was little opportunity for the exercise of conscience. Girls were given the opportunity to withdraw from *salah* in accordance with requirements of purity relating to menstruation.

The extent to which individual choice could be promoted seemed contested within the school. The way that the faith was taught within the school did not involve comparisons or emphasise distinctions in respect of other faiths. But this school, I feel, was in many ways defined, and defined itself, by its otherness, in terms of religion and ethnicity. The Head, himself a British Muslim convert, observed that it is 'very very difficult for people to be Muslim if surrounded by non-Muslims'<sup>140</sup> and that as a result they risked becoming secularised. Being a Muslim within wider society was considered problematic by the school, and was presented as such to the students<sup>141</sup>. Religion in Britain was seen to have been consigned to the private sphere, a position viewed as antagonistic and a threat to Islamic practice<sup>142</sup>.

Staff within the school saw Islam in comparison with the secular world, but unlike the other schools in this research, this was also linked to notions of 'the West' and thus became more embodied than the abstract notion of 'the secular'<sup>143</sup>. The prospectus too spoke of 'an education system dominated by Western influences which erodes their Islamic values and heritage'<sup>144</sup>.

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<sup>137</sup> Ritual washing before prayers

<sup>138</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

<sup>139</sup> Lesson observation

<sup>140</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

<sup>141</sup> Lesson observation

<sup>142</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

<sup>143</sup> MI school prospectus, Head Teacher(MI)

<sup>144</sup> MI school prospectus p.3



The relationship between Islam and the wider society, in particular the preservation of Islamic beliefs and practice, formed the basis of a tension within the school, resulting not from a different conception of the problem, but how best to tackle it. Although not advocating separation and segregation himself the Head saw that there were those within the school who would advocate complete separation. Referring principally to the management he suggested 'some people think the solution is to live in a world where complete segregation is a good idea, a duty'<sup>145</sup>.

The Head, along with a number of other staff, wanted to help the students integrate and find a way to hold their multiple identities in plurality, and encourage and respect those other identities. For the students there was the additional problem of a significant inter-generational gap between them and their parents, which as well as relating to religion also involved cultural differences<sup>146</sup>. The new PSHE curriculum, which was still in the design stage, was attempting to reflect this by helping students to see that many of the issues and values that they had were not unique to them, but were shared by many in wider society<sup>147</sup>. For a number of the students the school provided an opportunity to explore their various identities and it became an important link between wider society and their Islamic identity.

The alternative view was that anything outside Islam, which in many cases was closely linked to culture and to the image of the community, was suspect and should be restricted. The safest way for them to achieve this was by segregating themselves, and, more importantly in terms of this research, their children, from wider society. The school can be seen as an important support within that segregation structure; for example with the Modern Foreign Language curriculum focusing on Urdu and Arabic with no inclusion of European languages.

The school was therefore seen by some as educating the students to take their place in British society whilst retaining their religious practice and beliefs, in much the same way as the other schools in the research. What was different from the other schools was an element within the school who saw the school rather as

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<sup>145</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

<sup>146</sup> ibid

<sup>147</sup> PSHEE Coordinator(MI)

helping to educate the students to take their place within a subset of society through the maintenance of particular religious practices.

#### **4.6.5 MI School Summary**

The MI school is overtly religious, and as in the RCI school the daily routine of prayer is an important part of school life. It differed from the other schools in the research in that almost all the students had at least one parent born outside the UK. The school was ethnically diverse, but not as religiously diverse as the other faith schools. There was little teaching and opportunity for interaction with other faiths, and thus the potential for the students to challenge stereotypes or really understand faith as a lived reality was limited.

This school was not alone in detecting elements of ethnic tensions among its students and was trying to address this. Whilst not suggesting that the issue arose in the school, there was an indication that the school might have been unintentionally exacerbating the problem through the creation of out-groups and in-groups related to the ethnic origin of the leadership of the school.

The aim of nurturing a Muslim (religious) identity featured strongly within the school. This was the only school in which perceived threats to the faith group were being communicated to the students, threats which came from 'the West' and secularism. The element of choice that the school saw the students having over their faith was unclear and uncertain. However, some of those who were specifically involved in religious instruction held the view that faith was not a matter of personal choice, thus there was an indication that the faith was being presented to the students as impermeable. Although some in the school encouraged the students in interests and identities other than their Muslim ones this was not universal and was restricted. The emphasis on right religious practice and behaviour, which was tied to maintaining a positive image of the group within the local Muslim community, indicated a prototype and highlighted the students' distinctiveness.

Finally, the extent to which the students could challenge and critically examine their faith was also restricted, which is an indication that the school might be less effective than the other schools in developing its students' cognitive skills.

#### 4.7 The Non-Faith Independent School

This school, in common with the RCI school, has an old foundation and originally educated boys; over the last decade it has become fully co-educational. Situated in inner London it was a popular, high-achieving, 11-18 selective day school. It had around 1250 students (1:2 ratio of girls to boys) with most students continuing into the 6<sup>th</sup> form. It regularly achieved well above the national average for GCSE and A level with a number of students gaining places at Oxbridge each year.

The pupils displayed a wide mix of ethnic backgrounds, to some extent reflecting the area of London in which it is situated (Appendix J). Around 49% of the students professed some religious belief, and all the major faith groups were represented within the school.

Unsurprisingly for a school in inner London it is situated on a restricted site. The school has a core of Victorian and older buildings, but there is a rolling programme of improvements which in the past few years have included the addition of a theatre, 6<sup>th</sup> form centre and new science facilities. The students could be involved in a vast array of extra-curricular activities and at the weekends the 6<sup>th</sup> formers helped with extension classes for local children.

The school traces its inception to the seventeenth century when a wealthy local gentleman set up a foundation to fund eight poor boys from the area to attend local schools. The school in its present form was founded in the latter part of the nineteenth century and retained that original desire to make academic excellence available to any boy, regardless of his social class. After the 1944 Education Act the school became a direct grant school, and later pupils were funded by the Assisted Places Scheme. Since the demise of those schemes the school has set up a fund to continue to make places available to students from a wide range of backgrounds. At the time of the research about 7% of the school population received a fully funded place<sup>148</sup>.

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<sup>148</sup> Deputy Head(NFI)

From its seventeenth-century origins the school has been strongly associated with liberalism<sup>149</sup> and, unusually for a school of this date, has only ever had the most cursory of links to religion.

#### **4.7.1 Contact**

This school was the most highly selective on academic ability of all the schools in this research, and this academic excellence is important to the school. The Deputy Head said that one of the overall school aims was 'wanting to be the school of first choice for bright children'<sup>150</sup> in that area. Segregation on the grounds of ability was both intentional and part of the identity of the school. But within individual subjects the students displayed, and the school catered for, a wide ability range<sup>151</sup>. Thus the students regularly came into contact with a range of academic abilities.

There was a degree of social exclusivity involved with this school. But the significant numbers of scholarships and means-tested bursaries available meant that the students came from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds<sup>152</sup>. The students also came into contact with people from a wide range of backgrounds through community activities which the school encouraged; community service was to become compulsory in Year 12.

The ethnic diversity seen in the school's locality was somewhat reflected in the school's intake, and certainly one would not see there being any ethnic segregation in the school. The students had various opportunities in and outside school to mix on different levels with students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

The identity of this school is closely tied to four elements which are themselves interconnected, and which have historically been seen as integral to the school. It sees itself as valuing academic excellence; aiming to offer high quality education to students regardless of their social and economic position; being

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<sup>149</sup> NFI website, Deputy Head(NFI)

<sup>150</sup> Deputy Head(NFI)

<sup>151</sup> Lesson observations

<sup>152</sup> NFI website, Deputy Head(NFI)

secular, and promoting liberal values<sup>153</sup>. The links to secularism and liberalism, and to a lesser extent diversity of income, are actually seen by the school as markers of its distinctiveness.

A wide variety of faith backgrounds were represented in the school, while about 50% of the students professed to have no faith. Interaction with people of different faiths was part of the everyday school experience.

The RE syllabus included modules on all major world religions, and it was hoped that the course would enable the students to have a comprehensive understanding of the major religions practised in the UK<sup>154</sup>. At KS3 the students followed an internally devised course in Religious Studies. In Years 7 and 8 this covered the major world religions, considering them as discrete entities rather than taking a thematic approach. In Year 9 the focus was on philosophical and ethical questions, and it was here that students were initially introduced to the idea of religion as embodied<sup>155</sup>. At KS4 students had the option to take IGCSE RE which concentrated on Christianity and Islam, although other faiths were discussed and compared. As would be expected, a non-confessional approach was taken to the teaching of RE. Although the students had knowledge about the religions, what they were seen to lack, and which the school was trying to address, was any concept of the meaning of religious belief in people's lived experience. It was considered necessary to introduce students to the concept of the religious community and the religious person, with the Head of RE commenting that until some of the Year 10 had gone on a visit to the local church recently, many of them had never interacted with anyone as a religious person<sup>156</sup>. The Head of RE's concern reflects the stress of the modified Contact Hypothesis on the form of contact, and that contact should be meaningful, raising concerns about whether the contact in this school fulfilled that criterion.

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<sup>153</sup> Deputy Head(NFI)

<sup>154</sup> Head of RE(NFI)

<sup>155</sup> *ibid*

<sup>156</sup> *ibid*

#### 4.7.2 Socialisation

The moral framework of both the non-faith schools is much harder to define than for the faith schools. This independent school would describe itself as liberal and its approach as secular, although the Deputy Head was keen to stress that this did not mean that the spiritual was not valued. He explained 'Our approach is secular. That is not to say we don't value spirituality, we do, in terms of valuing others and appreciation of the world around them'<sup>157</sup>. The values underpinning the school were seen to incorporate both those values which had been important from the school's foundation, and those reflecting the contemporary community in which it was situated. These values included tolerance and an appreciation of difference, but also autonomy and an appreciation of the individual. The way that these values could be seen to mould and directly affect school policies, or the curriculum subjects such as PSHEE, was unclear. During the year of the research the pupils had one tutorial period a week of PSHEE with their form tutors, and they also had a rolling programme of citizenship topics for one period per week. This was to change in subsequent years<sup>158</sup>.

The school provided many opportunities for the students to engage in extra-curricular activities which gave opportunities for the celebration of diverse identities, for example sporting and musical achievements.

#### 4.7.3 Cognitive Sophistication

Within RE the students were exposed to other moral frameworks by considering how religious and non-religious people expressed meaning and purpose in their lives, and through this it was hoped that they would develop their own ideas.<sup>159</sup> What the RE department tried to guard against was the notion that liberal just meant that everyone was entitled to their own opinion, which was considered as a lazy response given by people who did not want to engage with debate. Within RE there was an emphasis on critiquing and evaluating claims and beliefs<sup>160</sup>. Debate and critical reasoning skills were encouraged and were being developed throughout

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<sup>157</sup> Deputy Head(NFI)

<sup>158</sup> Head of RE(NFI)

<sup>159</sup> *ibid*

<sup>160</sup> *ibid*

the school. There was an extensive PSHEE programme which involved wide-ranging debate and discussion<sup>161</sup> and AS Critical Thinking was offered as a Year 12 enrichment activity.

Slight underlying tensions could be detected between the school's endorsement of liberal-secularism, and religious belief. Fundamental to the school's notion of liberalism was the belief in autonomy. In matters of religion, amongst other things, all lifestyles, beliefs and views were considered acceptable, but a tension arose over the extent to which religious beliefs should be kept in the private sphere. Religion was not rejected in the school, but was given little space for expression, seen in the limited way that faith was encountered within the school other than through RE. As would be expected of a non-faith school, compulsory religious practice was almost non-existent, although a Founder's Day service and carol service were held in the local parish church once a year, and the school did have ongoing links with this church. Assemblies were held at least once a week for each Year group, and the one I attended included a presentation and notices rather than any worship or mention of faith and belief<sup>162</sup>. The school had a small chapel and a voluntary weekly service was held, attended by a small number of pupils. Chapel and other informal religious societies operated on the same basis as other extra-curricular activities, and as such could be seen to emphasise the private nature of faith.

A second related tension was also detected between giving the students information and freedom to choose their own moral framework, and yet at the same time the liberal nature of the school potentially acting as an unchallenged normative framework. The more explicit moral frameworks found within the faith schools appeared to make it easier for challenges to be made to any framework. In the NFI school it was a much more complex task to determine what was occurring in this regard.

A combination of these two tensions meant that debate and discussion relating to matters of faith were sometimes restricted. This was particularly noticeable in RE where students with strong views, which were significantly

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<sup>161</sup> Lesson observations

<sup>162</sup> Field notes

different from the mainstream, were not felt to be comfortable expressing them<sup>163</sup>. This was not in any way considered to be a school policy, rather it was inherent in the school culture, and a reflection of the liberal-secular nature of the school<sup>164</sup>.

#### **4.7.4 NFI School Summary**

As might be expected of a non-faith school, expressions of faith and religion were much less evident than they were in the faith schools.

The NFI school emphasised the development of critical reasoning skills, and debate and discussion were a familiar part of the students' school experience. It was also evident that the school encouraged students to respect others, and no groups were seen to be negatively stereotyped. The students were also able to interact on a daily basis with students from a wide variety of backgrounds. The school was religiously diverse, meaning that students had the opportunity to interact with the Religious Other (in this case possibly any people following a religious belief) on a daily basis. However, questions were raised about the extent to which the students interacted in a way that could be considered meaningful. This in turn was related to questions about how, and to what extent, faith was expressed within the school, and how faith was implicitly portrayed as belonging to the private sphere. This was not a negative image of religion, but one that removed it from everyday experience, which could be seen to reduce the opportunity for contact.

#### **4.8 The Non-Faith State School**

This school is a medium-sized (900 pupils), co-educational comprehensive school with a maths and computing specialism, situated in the London suburbs with a catchment area overlapping with the NFI school. Founded in the late 1990s, until recently the school was 11-16, but a 6<sup>th</sup> form was in the process of being established. The school is situated on a fairly generous site bordering communal playing fields to which it has direct access. The accommodation is a mixture of

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<sup>163</sup> Head of RE(NFI)

<sup>164</sup> *ibid*



predominantly low-rise buildings with a recently built administrative block and music centre.

The students came from a wide variety of backgrounds, social, cultural, ethnic and religious. Although the immediate vicinity of the school could be described as a middle-class white suburb, it is situated between two ethnically distinct areas, and also has a large amount of social housing in its catchment area. The school intake reflected this demographic (Appendix J), and perhaps surprisingly had high numbers of students on free school meals and students with English as an additional language. In recent years the school has had to respond to influxes of particular immigrant groups which have in some instances required focused interventions<sup>165</sup>. The school was popular and attracted high- achieving students, but also catered for students with a wide range of abilities. The Deputy Head referred to the school as having a 'long tail' of abilities<sup>166</sup>. The school was regularly oversubscribed and achieved GCSE results above the national average.

The school had a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and clubs which the students could attend, and regularly arranged after-school visits to productions, as well as putting on productions and performances itself.

#### **4.8.1 Contact**

This school prides itself on being inclusive, with one of its main aims being to help the students to 'appreciate and celebrate other's cultures and beliefs'<sup>167</sup>. Festivals of the various faiths and other groups represented in the school were publicly celebrated. This school did not directly, or seemingly indirectly, segregate on any grounds. The school intake was ethnically, religiously and culturally diverse, and although a high proportion of the students were from middle-class families there were a significant number who were from low socio-economic status families<sup>168</sup>. The school therefore enabled the students to interact with those from a range of different groups within society.

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<sup>165</sup> Head of Year10(NFS)

<sup>166</sup> Deputy Head(NFS)

<sup>167</sup> ibid

<sup>168</sup> Deputy Head, Head of Year10(NFS)

The school's policy of inclusion appeared to allow for difference to be acknowledged and accepted as part of the school, and students seemed free to express their various identities. This openness was not without problems, and intermittently what the Deputy Head described as 'little threads' of social and ethnic groupings occurred in the playground<sup>169</sup>. The school's approach to this highlighted its inclusive intention. Such groupings were noted. If they were perceived to be producing a negative outcome, generally through the creation of an exclusive in-group or a particular out-group, the school would intervene. The manner of the intervention was tailored to the individual circumstances.

A range of different faiths were studied as part of the KS3 Beliefs and Values course (as RE was known), which followed the Local Authority Agreed Syllabus. At KS4 students took the short course Edexcel GCSE RS. The modules chosen focused on Christianity and Islam, again giving the students exposure to other faiths, particularly those most represented in the school. The students therefore were able to gain knowledge about the main faiths in the UK. The RE teaching within school was supplemented by visits to places of worship and external speakers. The Head of RE talked about two challenges she faced. The first was that despite the school wanting the students to accept and celebrate diversity, it was limited somewhat by wider society, as organising trips to places of worship could be problematic and cause tensions<sup>170</sup>. The second was the difficulty of teaching RE to students who had no faith background or notion of the spiritual<sup>171</sup>. Both these challenges point towards possible issues around the extent to which the contact with the Religious Other within the school could be considered as meaningful, in the sense of enabling the students to understand faith as a lived reality. However, the way that the school allowed students the freedom to express their religious identity, and the way that faith was included in assemblies, could be seen to be assisting the students to see faith in that way.

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<sup>169</sup> Deputy Head(NFS)

<sup>170</sup> Head of RE(NFS)

<sup>171</sup> *ibid*

Although, as in the NFI school, there was no compulsory religious practice within the school and assemblies were seen as secular<sup>172</sup>, faith was not excluded and speakers from various faith groups, such as the Three Faiths Forum, were sometimes invited in<sup>173</sup>. The assemblies were closely linked into the school values which in turn were seen as drawing on most faith traditions<sup>174</sup>. Although not requiring the students to pray in the traditional sense, assemblies did try to include a spiritual aspect by giving students a period of reflection time<sup>175</sup>.

#### **4.8.2 Socialisation**

Unlike the NFI school this school does not have a historical tradition to draw upon, and when the school was founded in the late 1990s its moral framework had to be consciously formulated<sup>176</sup>. The task in the NFS school can be contrasted with the faith schools where the task was to operationalise an existing moral framework.

Rather than having an explicit moral framework, the school had identified some core values and beliefs<sup>177</sup>. These included showing respect to others, being caring, and valuing and celebrating diversity. These were taken as universal values and within the school they were acknowledged as being recognised in the vast majority of belief systems<sup>178</sup>. Thus faith traditions were consciously included within the framework rather than removed to the realm of the personal. The values were expressed within the school as expectations, and were seen to apply within the school and the wider community<sup>179</sup>.

The SMT was keen to make these values explicit, although the extent to which this message was effectively delivered to staff was questioned by the Deputy Head and some members of staff<sup>180</sup>. The school mission statement and prospectus highlighted<sup>181</sup> the values, and policies were designed so that they reflected and

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<sup>172</sup> *ibid*

<sup>173</sup> *ibid*

<sup>174</sup> Deputy Head(NFS)

<sup>175</sup> Head of RE(NFS)

<sup>176</sup> Deputy Head(NFS)

<sup>177</sup> *ibid*

<sup>178</sup> *ibid*

<sup>179</sup> *ibid*

<sup>180</sup> Deputy Head, PSHEE Coordinator(NFS)

<sup>181</sup> NFS website

incorporated them. Tutor time, assemblies and some PSHEE themes were all consciously employed to reinforce these values and the school expectations. Staff were seen to be important modellers of the values, with a recent inset session devoted to this<sup>182</sup>. The school was not afraid to challenge parents if they saw the difference between home and school values as having a detrimental effect within the school<sup>183</sup>.

One of the main aims of the school was to help the students appreciate and celebrate diversity. In addition to expressing various identities students were encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities outside the formal curriculum. No evidence of stereotyping was observed in the school. Moreover the school was not afraid to use interventions with specific groups to challenge assumptions or behaviours, and outside speakers and groups were regularly engaged who could help in this regard.<sup>184</sup>

#### **4.8.3 Cognitive Sophistication**

Within the school, students were exposed to different moral frameworks, both formally and consciously through the RE syllabus, but also informally through debates which took place within RE<sup>185</sup>. The Head of RE gave several aims for RE in the school. She saw the academic study and engagement with RE as important for developing the skills of presenting arguments, understanding the points made by others and evaluating various viewpoints rather than just expressing an opinion. Within the group she wanted to encourage debate between students of different faith positions and those with none, considering the dialogue which emerged as effective in challenging stereotypes<sup>186</sup>.

In lessons such as PSHEE, the extent to which views based on other moral frameworks were considered was less clear<sup>187</sup>. In part I feel this was exacerbated by the subject being taught by form tutors, meaning that there was a much wider variation in competence and willingness to engage with, and possibly accept, other

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<sup>182</sup> Deputy Head(NFS)

<sup>183</sup> Deputy Head, Head of Year10(NFS)

<sup>184</sup> Lesson observations, Head of Year10, Head of RE, PSHEE Coordinator(NFS)

<sup>185</sup> Lesson observations, Head of RE(NFS)

<sup>186</sup> *ibid*

<sup>187</sup> PHHEE Coordinator(NFS)

stances<sup>188</sup>. Challenges to the framework of values were allowed and the school encouraged debate. The Deputy Head said that he would prefer to have intolerant students who 'were able to express their opinions than those who held them quietly and they were stamped down and ignored'<sup>189</sup>.

In discussions with members of staff around the area of values the main focus was on developing cognitive skills, but this was connected to helping the students to make informed choices in their lives. The PSHEE curriculum was one avenue through which students were informed about their options. As well as covering the statutory topics the programme was adapted by the PSHEE coordinator to respond to local and contemporary issues, and the school saw it as important that students were exposed to a wide variety of situations and experiences<sup>190</sup>. Ultimately the school aimed for open-minded students who were aware of choices but also of the consequences of those choices<sup>191</sup>.

#### **4.8.4 NFS School Summary**

In the NFS school helping the students to appreciate diversity was a prominent aim. The diversity of the school population enabled the students to interact with students from a wide array of different backgrounds, including different faith backgrounds, on a daily basis. The way in which the school fostered inclusion was not by emphasising commonality, but instead by acknowledging and celebrating the students' multiple identities, which again included the students' religious identities. This meant that the contact between the students was likely to be meaningful. Rather than just refraining from promoting negative stereotypes the school worked hard to monitor their occurrence and to challenge any negative stereotypes and assumptions about groups which the students held.

The school promoted choice, providing students with a range of options, including, to a limited extent, other moral frameworks. It was also actively aiming to develop its students' critical reasoning and related skills, thereby increasing their cognitive sophistication.

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<sup>188</sup> Lesson observation, PSHEE Coordinator(NFS)

<sup>189</sup> Deputy Head(NFS)

<sup>190</sup> ibid

<sup>191</sup> PSHEE Coordinator(NFS)

#### **4.9 Provisional Hypotheses**

This chapter has looked at each research school individually, and has presented the analysis of the various data collected from fieldwork conducted within the schools, primarily that gained through observation and interviews with key members of staff. Within each school the data were analysed using the four themes (contact, socialisation, cognitive sophistication and the religious identity) which correspond to the ways that the schools potentially might impact on their students' attitudes of tolerance. After some general remarks this section will generate provisional hypotheses relating to the effect that the schools might be having on their students' attitudes of tolerance.

What became apparent during my fieldwork was that all the schools were very different from each other in many ways. There was no easily identifiable model of 'faith school', and all the schools could be seen to reflect local contextual factors. This was perhaps most evident in the RCS school. Faith was very apparent within this school, and clearly provided a source of strength and direction to the staff, as well as influencing the way that the school was run. Nevertheless, the particular and pressing needs of the local area, and the students, meant that the aim of faith nurture took second place to those local needs. However, generally in terms of the aspects of the schools which could be seen to affect tolerance, the schools showed remarkable similarity. The school which emerged as being the most different was the MI school. The two main areas of difference between this school and the others were related to faith; the restriction on critical examination of the faith, and the way in which the religious identity was nurtured and portrayed. In the discussion below the schools will be compared across each of those four aspects in turn, and provisional hypotheses related to each aspect will be generated.

##### **Contact**

It was found that all four faith schools (RCI, RCS, ECI and MI) limited the amount of contact that their students had with those of other faiths. The faith schools' primary aim of faith nurture could be seen to decrease the amount of time available for teaching about other faiths. In addition unfamiliarity was exacerbated by the segregated nature of the schools on faith grounds, and the lack of any

prolonged provision for the students to interact with those of other faiths through discussion groups or joint projects. This is likely to mean that the stereotypes and fears that the students hold about other faiths are unlikely to be challenged, leading to them displaying lower tolerance towards these groups.

Due to the religiously diverse nature of the NFI and NFS schools the students encountered a variety of members of different faiths (and of no faith) on a daily basis. But in the NFI school the nature of the contact, in particular the opportunities for the students to appreciate faith as a lived reality, was seen to be potentially problematic. This was related to the school's promotion of liberal-secularism, and the way that this placed faith in the private sphere.

This analysis indicated that the RCI, RCS, ECI, MI and NFI schools all impact negatively on their students' attitudes of tolerance towards those of other faiths (or of any faith) due to the lack of opportunity for contact that the schools provide. The way that the contact is limited differs between the four faith schools and the NFI school and this might indicate a possible difference in the tolerance displayed between these two groups. It is difficult to comment on what the effect might be, and therefore at this stage in this provisional hypothesis no such differentiation has been included. The first hypothesis in respect of contact is:

- ***Hypothesis A: The students in the RCI, RCS, ECI, MI and NFI schools will show lower attitudes of tolerance towards those of other faiths than towards other groups due to the lack of contact with other faiths that the school provides. The tolerance shown will be similar across the RCI, RCS, ECI, MI and NFI schools, but will be lower than that shown in the NFS school.***

The way that the RCI school students were segregated in terms of socio-economic backgrounds, and the limited opportunity that the students had to interact with students from a range of social backgrounds within school, indicated that students in this school may show lower tolerance towards other socio-economic groups. While this is related to an aspect of the school, it is not related to a faith aspect. Interaction with those of another socio-economic group was not limited in the other schools (RCS, ECI, MI, NFI and NFS), and therefore it could be

predicted that these schools would show similar levels of tolerance towards these groups.

- ***Hypothesis B: The students in the RCS, ECI, MI, NFI and NFS schools will show similar attitudes of tolerance towards those of a different socio-economic group and the students in the RCI school will show lower tolerance towards those of lower socio-economic status due to the lack of contact with this group within the RCI school.***

### **Socialisation**

The analysis indicated that in the MI school the school might have been exacerbating the formation of ethnic in-groups and out-groups, resulting in lower tolerance being shown towards those of other ethnic groups. The relationship of the in-group to the ethnic origin of the school founder and many in leadership positions in the school, means that this has a complex and probably tangential relation to faith. In the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS schools no out-groups were identified and therefore these schools would be unlikely to show differences in tolerance based on the schools' promotion of ethnic out-groups. The following hypothesis can therefore be generated:

- ***Hypothesis C: The students in the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS schools will show similar attitudes of tolerance towards those of a different ethnic group, and the students in the MI school will show lower tolerance towards other ethnic groups due to the way in which the MI school forms an in-group/out-group based on ethnic lines.***

### **Cognitive Sophistication**

The RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS schools can all be seen to be encouraging their students to develop their critical thinking skills, and increasing their level of cognitive sophistication, and thus it would be predicted that the students in these schools would all show similar levels of tolerance. The MI school was seen as possibly failing to develop higher levels of cognitive sophistication in its students, by restricting the extent to which the students could critically examine their faith and



challenge authority. This would suggest that the students in this school would show lower levels of tolerance. The object of tolerance here cannot be confidently predicted, but as the restriction is specifically related to the critical examination of the faith, at this stage those of other faiths would seem to be the most likely group towards which lower tolerance would be shown. Therefore the provisional hypothesis is:

- ***Hypothesis D: The students in the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS schools will show similar attitudes of tolerance, and the students in the MI school will show lower tolerance towards those of other faiths, due to the failure of the MI school to develop a higher level of cognitive sophistication in its students***

It will be noted in the case of some schools (MI and NFS) that this hypothesis contradicts Hypothesis A.

### **The Religious Identity**

The way in which the MI school undertook the formation of its students' religious identity, in particular the portrayal of the faith as impermeable, and the highlighting of certain threats to the faith, indicated that inter-group discrimination was likely to be employed in order to maintain the group's positive self-esteem. As in Hypothesis D above the object of tolerance is unclear, although the threat was seen to emanate from 'the West', but was also connected to secularism. However, this does suggest that the students in this school will show lower tolerance than their counterparts in the RCI, RCS and ECI schools. The NFI and NFS schools cannot be included in this discussion as the school data did not comment on the way that these schools were involved in religious identity formation. The RCI and RCS schools were very similar in that they portrayed the faith as permeable and as a personal choice, and therefore similar levels of tolerance would be expected to be seen in these schools. In the ECI school some questions were raised about the extent to which students might see the faith as permeable, and as themselves actually having a choice, which suggests that slightly lower tolerance might be seen in this school compared with the two Roman Catholic schools. Although a provisional hypothesis is generated here, there are several elements which are uncertain. The first is the

object of tolerance, and the second is whether the ECI students do see their faith as permeable. The following two chapters (5 and 6), in which the students' perspective is considered, will help to resolve these issues. Therefore the provisional hypothesis states:

- ***Hypothesis E: The students in the RCI and RCS schools will show similar attitudes of tolerance, which will be higher than those found in the ECI school. The MI school students will show the lowest attitudes of tolerance, due to their religious (social) identity.***

Having considered the school data the next two chapters will analyse the data from the students' perceptions of their schools. Using the same themes the data will be analysed, and the provisional hypotheses given in this chapter will be modified and added to in light of the student responses.

## Chapter 5: The Students' Religious Identity

### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter tried to ascertain, from the school perspective, which aspects of the schools might impact on the students' attitudes of tolerance. Five provisional hypotheses relating the students' attitudes to aspects of the schools were generated. However, the transmission of values from school to student is likely to be moderated by, or interact with, other influences (Dreeben, 1968; Stringer et al., 2010). Thus the extent to which the students absorb and, more importantly, perceive their school's input provides a richer understanding of the school. Therefore this and the following chapter will look at the schools from the students' perspective, using the themes introduced in Chapter 4. The focus of this chapter is on one of those themes, the students' religious identity, and the impact that the school might be having through the formation of that identity.

It will be recalled that Social Identity Theory (Chapter 2.3.7) identifies four criteria which need to be met before the strategy of inter-group bias will be used as a means of achieving positive group self-esteem (Turner, 1999, p. 20). These criteria are:

1. **Identification:** a person must identify with the in-group
2. **Salience:** a person must see that a group is present in a given context.
3. **Relevance:** an out-group must be seen to pose a threat to the in-group.
4. **Social Structure:** whether the in-group is seen as permeable.

The student interview and questionnaire responses were analysed using these criteria and the analysis is presented in this chapter.

As will become apparent at some points in this chapter, separating the school impact from background influences is problematic. Because the data analysed in this chapter are not the sole source of our understanding of the students' religious identity, when combined with data from other sources they yield important information about these schools. Provisional hypotheses will again be generated at the end of this chapter. In the previous chapter it was beneficial for understanding the schools to keep them whole and thus each school was discussed

in turn. In this and the next chapter the themes are discussed separately, to enable a comparison of the students' responses within a theme, as it was felt that this would enable differences and similarities to be highlighted more clearly.

## 5.2 Identification: Identifying with the Faith

This section compares the extent to which the students identify with their faith and how they use their social identity.

### 5.2.1 Degree of identification

The data explored here are drawn from two questionnaire items (B2.5 and 2.6) in which the students were asked how much they agreed with the statements

- My faith is important to me
- My faith is the most important part about me.

These particular questionnaire items were only asked to those students who professed a faith.

My faith is important to me. % of students				
School	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Neither	Agree or Strongly Agree	Average Likert Score
RCI N=89	4.5	12.4	83.1	4.11
RCS N=88	11.4	17.0	71.6	3.82
ECI N=23	4.3	17.4	78.3	3.96
MI N=44	0.0	0.0	100.0	4.86**
NFI N=47	8.5	27.7	63.8	3.79
NFS N=83	10.8	19.3	69.9	3.94
	7.5	15.8	76.7	4.05

\*\* significant at 1% level; Reference school: NFS

Table 5.1: QB2.5 student identification with their faith.

Apart from the MI school there is perhaps surprisingly little variation in the degree to which faith and non-faith school students identify with their faith, with the majority indicating that their faith was important to them (table 5.1). If the average Likert score is considered, then the only school whose score differs significantly is the MI school<sup>192</sup>. Nevertheless the proportion is higher in the faith schools than the non-faith schools. Table 5.2 shows the degree of student and parental attendance at religious worship, here used as an indication of religious commitment. With the exception of the RCI parents it can be seen that the faith schools have a higher proportion of religiously committed families than the non-faith schools. It is therefore likely that the higher identification with the faith among faith school students is reflecting the family's level of religious commitment, and equally it could be expected that more religiously committed families would be more likely to opt for faith schools for their children.

Attendance at Religious Worship				
School	% of students whose parents attend	% students attending weekly or fortnightly	% students only attending major festivals	% students who never attend
RCI	71	87	5	4
RCS	83	41	21	25
ECI	95	99	0	0
MI	93	86	11	0
NFI	81	22	44	7
NFS	73	43	29	18

Table 5.2: Religious commitment.

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<sup>192</sup> Linear regression.

A more complex picture emerges when the extent to which the faith identity acts as the principal identity is considered (Table 5.3).

My faith is the most important part about me % of students				
School	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Neither	Agree or Strongly Agree	Average Likert Score
RCI N=89	34.4	36.7	28.9	2.92
RCS N=88	32.2	31.0	36.8	3.09
ECI N=23	26.1	30.4	43.5	3.26
MI N=44	0.0	0.0	100.0	4.86**
NFI N=47	59.6	23.4	17.0	2.55**
NFS N=83	27.7	26.7	45.8	3.33
	31.0	26.7	42.2	3.25

\*\* significant at 1% level; Reference school: NFS

Table 5.3: Faith as principal identity.

The two schools which showed significant variation from the NFS reference school were the NFI and the MI schools. The lowest use of the religious identity as a principal identity was found in the NFI school. This finding is unsurprising given that it is a non-faith school and its students showed the lowest level of regular religious attendance (table 5.2).

For all the students in the MI school their religious identity was their principal identity, but in the remaining faith schools there was a much lower use of the religious identity as such. Comparison of data relating to religious commitment of both parents and students (table 5.2) suggests that this difference cannot be solely explained by the immediate family faith background. The ECI and MI schools had similarly high levels of attendance, but the ECI students were much less likely than the MI students to use their religious identity as their principal identity.

The NFS school was interesting as here 45% of the pupils of faith considered their faith identity as their principal identity, which was higher than in all but one of

the faith schools. If the data are broken down by faith within each school, then the use of the religious identity as the principal identity was higher among both Evangelical Christian and Roman Catholic students in the NFS school than in their 'own faith' schools (RCI, RCS and ECI schools). Only in the MI school was the identification greater in the faith school (table 5.4). The sample might be small in the Evangelical case, but this was also seen within the Roman Catholic schools suggesting that this cannot be dismissed as an anomaly.

My faith is the most important part of me % of students by faith group.			
School	Roman Catholic students in	Evangelical Christian students in	Muslim students in
NFS	<b>50%</b> <b>8/16 pupils</b>	<b>66.6%</b> <b>2/3 pupils</b>	<b>88.9%</b> <b>16/18 pupils</b>
NFI	0% 8 pupils	0% 2 pupils	50% 1/2 pupils
RCI	31% 22/71 pupils		
RCS	35.7% 20/56 pupils		
ECI		38.1% 8/21 pupils	
MI			100% 44 pupils

Table 5.4: Faith as principal identity by faith group.

The degree of identification with the faith was also explored in the student interviews, where participants were asked what were the three most important things that they would want someone meeting them to know about them. The interview data supported the high identification with the faith shown by the MI school students, with four of the eight interview candidates in this school referring to their faith as an important identity for them<sup>193</sup>. Just two of the thirty-three remaining interview candidates did so; one, a Muslim in the NFS school, and the other a Pentecostal Christian girl in the RCS school<sup>194</sup>.

<sup>193</sup> Yasmin, Hussain, Noor, Zainab (MI)

<sup>194</sup> Hassan (NFS); Grace (RCS)

This analysis indicated that the degree of family religious commitment is not the only factor impacting on the student's decision to use their religious identity as their principal identity. A high level of parental and student religious commitment was seen in both the ECI and MI school, but markedly different degrees of identification. Neither did attendance at a faith school necessarily indicate that there would be a higher level of identification with the faith, rather this relationship was shown to be complex.

There was some evidence that attendance at a faith school might account for some of the difference in the MI school. Muslim identification with the faith was clearly strong generally, as indicated by the Muslim students in the NFS school (89% in NFS cf 100% in MI), but identification was higher in the MI school suggesting that the school could have been having an impact.

The situation was less straightforward in the cases of the other faith schools, RCI, RCS, ECI, where identification with the faith was lower than that shown by the respective students in the NFS school. The immediate family religious background could not account for the differences seen in this situation either, which suggests that there may be some school effect, but it is difficult to determine whether attendance at one of these three faith schools was lowering the faith identification, or whether some aspect of the NFS school was increasing faith identification. The complexity of the relationship between school composition and student identities, which this research has highlighted, was also found by Agirdag et al. (2011). Their research, which looked at school ethnic composition and national identity, highlighted the importance of contextual factors in determining the strength of the national identity as well as indicating the way that inter-ethnic friendships mediated the relationships.

### **5.2.2 Use of the Identity**

In the interviews, when asked to describe themselves, most students' answers were given from what could be seen as the inter-personal end of the inter-personal/inter-group identity continuum. The responses could be broadly classified into either relating to hobbies and interests, or to personality and character, with



many students referring to both. Rhys's character and Hugh's hobby responses are typical:

*'I would want them to know I'm a funny person... um.. easy to get along with. That I'm fun to be around like... not really loud but quite laid back' [Rhys RCS]*

*[I would want them to know] 'That I like space a lot. I do a lot of rowing in school and a lot of sport in general' [Hugh NFI]*

Responses referring to character, such as being 'good' or 'nice', usually related to the student's personal identity, but in the MI school respondents' answers character was also seen to be related to their religious identity, connected through behaviour and/or practice<sup>195</sup>.

*'Just that they know the type of person I am as in Muslims praying five times a day, they're [sic] quite strong with the religion.'* [Yasmin MI]

*'Well I like to do my prayers on time, not late or anything. I try my hardest to do them on time and everything and get everything perfect'* [Hussain MI]

Only one other example of this connection between character and religious identity was seen, from a RCS student<sup>196</sup>.

Other differences could be detected between the schools in the students' use of their religious identity, and this broadly followed the same pattern as was seen in the levels of identification discussed above. In the RCI school the students made reference to both their Roman Catholic, and, to a lesser degree, their Christian identity, but only in situations where discussion made reference to religion. Therefore this can be seen as situational rather than chronic<sup>197</sup> (Hogg, 2006) (Chapter 2.3.7). Christian was a salient identity for the students in the ECI

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<sup>195</sup> Yasmin, Ibrahim, Hussain, Noor (MI)

<sup>196</sup> Grace (RCS)

<sup>197</sup> Christina, Jon, Gregory (RCI)

school, with many of the students using it in a variety of contexts, not only when the question made reference to religion<sup>198</sup>. In the MI school Muslim was a frequently used identity, often being used in seemingly non-religious contexts, indicating it was a salient identity<sup>199</sup>.

Students in all the schools were regularly using their personal rather than any social or group identity that they might have. A slightly higher use of the religious social identity was seen among the ECI school students, and this use was higher again for the MI school students. The religious identity was used in more contexts, and was thus more salient, in the MI and ECI schools than in the Roman Catholic schools.

### **5.3 Salience: How Distinctive is the Group?**

The students' image of their own in-group is considered in this section. It focuses on the in-group's degree of distinctiveness from others (most notably mainstream society) as well as exploring whether the students identify with and can define a prototype and, to a lesser extent, a stereotype. The data used here come from the student interviews, but also from questionnaire items B2.1 and 2.3.

The data emphasised an MI/other school divide. The students in the MI school saw themselves as distinctive and different, with the root of this difference being their faith. One indicator of this divide can be seen in the extent to which the students would consider marrying outside their own faith (table 5.5) where 82% of the MI school students agreed with the statement 'I would only marry someone from my own faith', twice the magnitude of any of the responses in the other schools.

These sentiments were also evident in the interviews. The interviews indicated that the decision not to marry outside the faith was related to a given religious prohibition<sup>200</sup>, with several of the respondents referring to the different rulings regarding men and women<sup>201</sup>. Even where such a ruling was seen to allow for marrying outside the faith under specific conditions, (e.g. if the prospective

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<sup>198</sup> Nick, Anna, Esther (ECI)

<sup>199</sup> Noor, Ibrahim, Suliman, Yasmin, Saira (MI)

<sup>200</sup> The precise nature of the prohibition varies between different Islamic interpretations see (Friedman et al., 2003).

<sup>201</sup> Saira, Yousef, Hussain (MI)

partner was willing to convert) this was not universally countenanced, as Saira illustrates below:

*'if they had the intention of converting them to Islam and showing them the way to Islam then it's permissible for them to marry, but my sister I wouldn't let her marry a person who wasn't Muslim' [Saira MI]*

Whereas Saira does not elaborate on the reason for her view about her sister, Hussain qualifies his own similar response. He connects the decision of his female cousin not to marry a non-Muslim with correct behaviour, and I think, by extension, family honour (*izzat*).

*'OK first of all she's a girl. Obviously Muslim girls are different to the boys, 'cause first of all they cover themselves and they stay away from the boys. So that situation would... be very unlikely to occur. So knowing how she's a religious person it's ok. I know she wouldn't do something like that.'* [Hussain MI]

In the ECI, RCS and RCI schools no similar prohibition was attached to choice of marriage partner, with the choice always being seen as a personal one<sup>202</sup>. In the one instance in these other schools where the wisdom of marrying outside the faith was questioned, this was related to the need for both parties to share similar values which were more likely to be found in another person of the same faith (in this case, Christian)<sup>203</sup>.

*'I think they have to share the same like faith as you otherwise you kind of disagree on some things. Yeah um.. it's not too bad disagreeing on some things but if it's that major in your life then you really need to agree.'* [Esther ECI]

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<sup>202</sup> Esther(ECI);Rhianna(RCS)

<sup>203</sup> Esther(ECI)

% of students who agree or strongly agree		
School	Only marry within their own faith	There is no one absolute true religion
RCI	31	32
RCS	40	30
ECI	27	5
MI	82	5
NFI	15	55
NFS	37	29

Table 5.5: Indicators of in-group distinctiveness.

Certain theological understandings, such as those relating to salvation (Chapter 2.4), can also be seen as potentially encouraging the view of distinctiveness. Question B2.3 (table 5.5) asked the students how much they agreed with the statement ‘There are many different religions, but no one absolute true religion’.

Only 5% of the MI and ECI school students agreed with this statement. If the numbers who disagreed (i.e. those who believe that there *is* only one true religion) are considered (91% MI and 77% ECI) this seems to indicate that the majority of the students in these two schools held exclusivist theological views. In these cases this would be consistent with the theological views of the ECI church community and some Muslim interpretations respectively. The questionnaire findings were consistent with the interview data in that the majority of the interview responses in the ECI and MI schools could be categorised as exclusivist<sup>204</sup>. In the MI school the remaining interview responses were conservatively inclusivist, in that there was an element of God ultimately deciding the fate of non-Muslims<sup>205</sup>. This interpretation of Islamic theology can be seen as creating a situation where a clear distinction is made between them and us; we are ‘saved’ they are not. Whereas this may also be the case in the ECI school, the impact may be more diluted, as more variation was seen and there were few students who actively subscribed to an exclusivist view.

<sup>204</sup> Suliman, Hussain, Zainab, Ibrahim (MI); Luke, Anna, Ben, Esther, Rebecca (ECI)

<sup>205</sup> Noor, Yasmin (MI)

In the Roman Catholic schools the students interviewed indicated that they held inclusivist<sup>206</sup> and sometimes even pluralist<sup>207</sup> views on salvation, which again was reflected in the questionnaire data where 32% of the RCI and 30% of the RCS students agreed with the statement that there is no one true religion. As has been discussed (Chapter 2.4) the official Roman Catholic interpretation would be clearly within the inclusivist understanding (Cardinale, 1966).

A striking difference between the MI school students and those in the other schools was the extent to which the MI school students perceived themselves as different from their peers in wider society, and what constituted that difference<sup>208</sup>. The MI school students saw little similarity between themselves and their peers, with the defining axis of difference being their religion.

*'I think my lifestyle would be quite different to someone who wasn't a Muslim. Because my lifestyle revolves around religion so maybe if it was like a Christian person instead of praying five times a day they probably go to Church every Sunday or something like that so it would be quite different.'* [Noor MI]

The interview question was intentionally open, asking how the respondent saw themselves in relation to a person of their age in the 'average' state school. But in two of the seven Muslim responses<sup>209</sup> an unprompted initial comparison was made specifically with Muslims in state schools. No similar comparison was ever made by respondents in the other faith schools. Students in the RCI, RCS and ECI did not see all state school students as non-religious and recognised that state school students may be of the same faith as them. In the MI school this initial comparison with Muslims in state schools seems to imply a sense of distance between the MI school students and wider society, in that the society to which they made reference was still initially a Muslim society.

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<sup>206</sup> Emily, Harriet, Jon, Christina (RCI)

<sup>207</sup> Gregory, Matt, Mark (RCI)

<sup>208</sup> Yasmin, Saira, Yousef, Hussain, Noor, Zainab (MI)

<sup>209</sup> Yasmin, Noor (MI)

In the case of the MI school students a prototype could be seen to emerge which related to religious practice and belief. Religious practice was particularly well defined and, amongst other things, included the prescribed daily prayers<sup>210</sup>, dress<sup>211</sup>, behaviour<sup>212</sup>, and understandings around prohibition and restriction<sup>213</sup>. For example Yasmin explained:

*'Muslims are reserved and are not allowed out much' [Yasmin MI]*

Saira also spoke of others not having prohibitions:

*'but the Muslim has certain things to follow, certain things she has to do' [Saira MI].*

The way that the MI students' lives revolved around religion was often referred to, and was seen as suggesting that they were more concerned, or thought more than others, about the consequences of their actions<sup>214</sup>. A weak stereotype was also detected which considered the Other as having greater choice and freedom, but which was also related to faith practice.

In the other schools the students saw significant overlap between themselves and their peers in wider society. Instances of differences being articulated were rare. In the NFI school, difference was occasionally expressed in terms of class and intellectual level<sup>215</sup>, whereas the faith school pupils principally categorised on the grounds of faith with differences being observed in moral beliefs.

*'I think Christians' views are .. like they're almost the same, there's just a few different things so like it makes it hard if you are going out and getting drunk and stuff because we don't believe in getting drunk.'*  
*[Nick ECI]*

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<sup>210</sup> Yasmin, Noor(MI)

<sup>211</sup> Zainab(MI)

<sup>212</sup> Yasmin, Saira, Noor, Zainab(MI)

<sup>213</sup> Yasmin, Saira(MI)

<sup>214</sup> Zainab, Yasmin, Saira, Hussain, Noor(MI)

<sup>215</sup> Georgina, Hugh(NFI)

*'Yeah like we [RCS students] definitely have the same lifestyle [as students in other schools] we've been brought up in the same environment' [Jade RCS]*

Rather than seeing distinctly defined groups, as the students in the MI school were tending to do, differences were seen to be a matter of degree, as demonstrated here by Grace:

*'Well I would say it's [her lifestyle] different because no it's slightly different because we're all teenagers so we all like to do the same things but it's just like some things you know ah yes this person's a Christian because the things she will say the things that she will do, how she will dress how she will present herself is different from a non Christian because she will follow fashion, wear the short skirt, put so much makeup on and stuff like that whereas a Christian would put makeup on to make themselves look good, but not to the extreme '*  
*[Grace RCS]*

Christian behaviour was occasionally referred to, but there was no consistency around what this amounted to. A well-defined prototype could not be determined, as it could in the MI school, nevertheless students in the RCI and ECI schools commented on the homogeneity of beliefs which they saw within their schools<sup>216</sup>.

*'when you are here like everyone sort of believes the same thing so it's not like oh you're catholic or whatever... it's like everyone's got the same views so you can also express what you feel more' [Emily RCI]*

This could indicate that some idea of a group prototype was present in the minds of these students, even if that was not clearly formulated, but it should be stressed that this was very weak and that the similarities were far greater than any distinctions.

The students in the MI school did appear to see a distinction between themselves, as members of their faith group, and Others in wider society. The sense of difference related both to religious belief and practice, and to general behaviour. Within the other schools the general feeling was one of similarity, which

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<sup>216</sup> Matt, Emily(RCI); Luke(ECI)

outweighed any notions of difference.

The MI school's influence on this is unclear. Much of the difference was strongly related to the students' belief. Whilst the school may be involved in forming that belief, it is not the sole influence, being more involved in the reinforcement rather than the creation of beliefs. Where I think we do see a possible school impact is through the segregation, which seems to be connected to the formation of prototypes, rather than the creation of an out-group. The segregation appears to allow or encourage the students to regard themselves as homogeneous. However, possibly because of the strength of the prototype, a weak comparison group was seen to emerge, that of Muslim students in non-Muslim schools.

#### **5.4 Relevance: The Relevant Out-Group**

An out-group only becomes relevant if it is perceived as posing some sort of threat to the in-group, and thus this section considers who students see as the relevant out-group, and whether they perceive any threats to the group identity.

The influence of the social context emerged as an important factor in determining what comparisons were made. In the NFS school<sup>217</sup> some comparisons were made relating to social class, with the out-group being those of a lower social class. This divide could be seen to originate in the local area, where the neighbourhoods reflected different classes, and thus the school was not involved in creating the divide; in fact the school was aware of this division and was trying to mitigate it.

The influence of the social context could also be detected in the NFI school<sup>218</sup>, where the identities used and the comparisons made related to being liberal and also to being more educated.

*'I kind of created an image in my head of a state school pupil not being as clever and not having as intellectual a background. They probably don't go home to a very big house with clever parents who have office jobs' [Hugh NFI]*

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<sup>217</sup> Edward, Louisa (NFS)

<sup>218</sup> Pippa, Hugh, Georgina, Anthony (NFI)



These aspects were promoted within the school, and thus the school could be considered as potentially influencing the comparison, possibly through reinforcement rather than creation.

Few comparisons were made in either Roman Catholic school. In the RCI school, even in context-specific situations when the students employed their religious identity, no clear out-group emerged. Rarely in the RCS school did any comparisons involve the students' Roman Catholic identity. However, the social context did emerge as influential, though unrelated to the school, with two respondents<sup>219</sup> making comparisons between local areas, which reflected the distrust arising from gang violence and the segregated nature of the locality.

The responses in the ECI school indicated that being Christian was a salient identity for the students, with the comparison sometimes being made to non-Christian<sup>220</sup>, a group which was not clearly defined. There was little to suggest that this out-group was being created by the school, but the segregated nature of the school was possibly reinforcing it. It did nevertheless suggest an out-group towards which discrimination and lower tolerance could be directed.

In the MI school, being Muslim was a frequently used identity in a variety of contexts, although it was possible that my presence, as a non-Muslim, was significant in making their Muslim identity more salient. A number of relevant out-groups could be detected, the first of which I will refer to as 'non-proper' Muslims. The term is complex and covers both non-practising Muslims but also Muslims who do not follow what is believed to be correct practice, such as the teacher who could not lead prayers<sup>221</sup> (Chapter 4.6.4). A fairly clear boundary between the in-group and the out-group, relating to observable religious practice, appeared to exist for many of the MI students. The school could be seen as at least reinforcing, and possibly in some cases creating, this distinction through the emphasis on correct practice in Islamic Studies.

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<sup>219</sup> Rhys, Jennifer(RCS)

<sup>220</sup> Rebecca, Esther, Laurence(ECI)

<sup>221</sup> Yasmin, Noor, Zainab(MI)

Although 'non-proper' Muslims emerged as an important out-group, a second was also detected, that of non-Muslim<sup>222</sup>, and this was employed in a variety of situations. There was also evidence of a tendency to equate non-Muslim with Christian, as can be seen here in a discussion with Ibrahim. In an earlier part of the interview Ibrahim had first referred to having non-Muslim friends and had subsequently referred to them as Christian:

*'HE .....you've got lots of friends you said who are not Muslim, so if you were out with them and one of them had a drink how would you feel?*  
**Ibrahim** *Umm.... I'd try to well what I would do is try to make him [not drink], because he's Christian' [Ibrahim MI]*

There was no evidence that the school was involved in the formation of this conflation of the two categories.

In the interviews the references to the non-Muslim group suggested that they were less relevant than the 'non-proper' Muslims. I think these groups should not be considered as totally distinct units, but more as concentric circles, where the boundary between Muslims (in-group) and 'non-proper' Muslims (out-group) is fairly well-defined and relates to practice, but where the boundary between 'non-proper' Muslims and non-Muslims is much less distinct. The comparison between the religious identity and having a defined out-group is strongest in this school and could be related to aspects of the school.

A final categorisation could be seen amongst a number of the students across the schools, that of a 'strong religious person'<sup>223</sup>, although the use of this categorisation differed. Those from a more liberal religious background, such as the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Jewish students (but also some from the ECI school) used the category in a derogatory manner<sup>224</sup>. In contrast those from a more conservative background (the MI, some ECI and the Pentecostal students in the NFS and RCS schools) viewed this as a positive attribute<sup>225</sup>. Thus the category of 'strong religious person' could be used either as an in-group or an out-group depending on

<sup>222</sup> Suliman, Yasmin, Saira, Hussain, Noor (MI)

<sup>223</sup> A number of synonyms were used; extreme, Christian Christian

<sup>224</sup> Christina, Annabel (RCI); Anna (ECI); Georgina, Pippa, Anthony (NFI)

<sup>225</sup> Chantelle (NFS); Rebecca, Esther, Luke (ECI); Grace (RCS)

one's theological understanding.

It was only in the case of the MI school that there were any consistently perceived threats to the religious identity. The students were asked how they thought their faith was viewed by the majority of people in the UK today. All the MI school students questioned on the issue saw Islam and Muslims being portrayed negatively by the media, and felt that many in society were influenced by this portrayal. These two responses were typical:

*'Muslims are bad, Muslims are basically if nowadays if you see a person with a topi<sup>226</sup> on and a beard they just say terrorist straight up and they don't even know the person.'* [Yousef MI]

*'many people because of the media and how they describe us to be many people don't see us as very nice or very good '* [Zainab MI]

This sense of insecurity and threat has been well documented by research into Muslims, and is seen to have increased since 9/11 and the London 7/7 bombings (Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, 2001; Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia et al., 2004; Driel, 2004).

Two other threats were discussed. The first, which was referred to by a Jewish student in the NFI<sup>227</sup> school, was initiated by a particular incident in which a Jewish home in her neighbourhood had been attacked. The second was in the ECI school, and had not emerged when the student was asked directly about threats, but only arose in a subsequent discussion centred around the position of a nearby Mosque. In this Bill explained:

*'At the moment it doesn't really bother me. You know it's kind of like rivals so..'* [Bill ECI]

Here we can see a situation where there is no explicit threat at present, and yet Bill's perception of the local Muslims as 'rivals' suggests that he is conscious of a

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<sup>226</sup> Hindi/Urdu word for hat, but also used specifically for the small brimless hat worn by males in the Mosque.

<sup>227</sup> Pippa(NFI)

low-level ongoing threat. There was no evidence that this view was widely held within the school.

A variety of out-groups were detected within the schools, some of which could be seen to originate from a wider social context, but also some where the schools themselves might have been involved indirectly through reinforcement rather than through creation. A threat to the religious identity was only detected in the case of the MI school.

### 5.5 Social Structure: Permeability

The likelihood of using inter-group bias is seen to increase if leaving the group is not considered a viable option (it is impermeable). Although conversion into the faith can be regarded as a dimension of permeability, here it was the ability of the faith member to leave which was of most significance, as that was the position of our respondents. Within this research the issue of whether a person felt that they could change their religion was not asked directly<sup>228</sup>, but information was gathered indirectly through issues of choice (see also Chapter 6.3.1). The point under consideration here is not the extent to which the students' upbringing has exposed them to adequate choices to enable them actually to leave the faith, but rather whether they believe that leaving is an option for them (see for example Callan, 1985; MacMullen, 2007; McLaughlin, 1984; Merry, 2007).

As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.3 the RCI, ECI and RCS schools' students generally felt that they were making their own choices about their faith, but more importantly in this section they considered the possibility of not following the faith, or any faith<sup>229</sup>. In an informal discussion with 6<sup>th</sup> formers at the RCI school several comments were made about the number of people who had become atheists after studying A level Christian Theology<sup>230</sup>. In the MI school only one student countenanced the possibility that she could ever not be a Muslim<sup>231</sup>. For

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<sup>228</sup> It was felt that this issue might be sensitive particularly in the MI school, in light of the fact that apostasy in some Muslim interpretations is punishable by death.

<sup>229</sup> Matt, Harriet, Jon, Mark(RCI); Luke, Anna, Laurence, Esther, Nick(ECI); Danny, Joseph, Hannah, Grace(RCS)

<sup>230</sup> Informal discussion with 6<sup>th</sup> form students (RCI)

<sup>231</sup> Zainab(MI)

her, choice was about the degree of adherence rather than complete rejection of the faith, suggesting that faith was seen as impermeable.

It would appear therefore, that this is an important difference between the MI students and the students in the other faith schools. The MI students seem not to consider their faith group as permeable, whereas the majority of students in the other schools do.

## **5.6 Influences on Student Beliefs**

In the above analysis of the way the students' group identity would possibly affect their attitude of tolerance, links to the potential involvement of the school have also been made. In some instances the potential impact of the school has been clear, but much of the time any connection has been related to religious beliefs and teachings. All the faith schools would see one of their aims as religious nurture or formation, but they are almost certainly not the sole influence in this aspect of the students' lives. It has already become apparent in this chapter that the school's influence on the degree of identification with the faith is not straightforward. Before leaving this section it seems prudent therefore to consider the students' perception of the role that the faith schools play in nurturing their faith. Is the school considered to have any impact, and if so what aspects of the school are seen as most influential?

Overwhelmingly, across all the schools, the people whom the students considered to have had most influence on their moral and religious beliefs were family, and most particularly either or both parents<sup>232</sup>. This finding is consistent with that of the research conducted in Dutch secondary schools by Bertram-Troost et al. (2009). Other influences were seen, which included school, friends and occasionally other family members. Parents were seen as instrumental in the child following a particular religious belief, primarily though introducing the child to religious practice, which in due course became normalised, something which would indicate that the parents were educating for cultural coherence (Merry, 2007) (Chapter 2.6.2).

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<sup>232</sup> Interview question: who do you think has had the most influence on your religious and /or moral beliefs?

Although parents and family were considered to have a large influence on beliefs, before considering the students' perceptions further, it is important to remember that religious teaching also occurs in activities associated with the place of worship (table 5.6). Distinct differences could be seen between groups in the students' participation in such activities, with 100% of ECI students and 80% of MI students attending activities outside school at their place of worship. The high participation of Muslim students in supplementary education is a well-documented phenomenon (Mogra, 2007; Parker-Jenkins, 1995; Raza, 1991).

School	% students attending activities at the place of worship outside school
RCI	37
RCS	34
ECI	100
MI	80
NFI	39
NFS	37

Table 5.6: Students' attendance at non-school related activities at their place of worship.

Rarely did any of the students mention the school as playing a part in their religious beliefs, without prompting. Nevertheless, when specifically questioned on their school's role, the students did acknowledge its influence. Responses were generally positive and although variation was seen between students, more interestingly distinct differences could be seen between schools. The responses can broadly be categorised into three groups; teaching about the faith, religious practice, and the school environment.

Many of the students found that the school was influential through teaching them about their faith and beliefs. Yasmin's response was typical:

*'before I didn't know much about Islam, but I did practice' [Yasmin MI]*

This influence through increased knowledge was important in the MI and the RCS schools. In the latter this was often tied to the notion of discussing and

opening up the student's own beliefs. In the MI school this knowledge was seen to infuse the curriculum, as Zainab explained:

*'every lesson you have some input of Islam and that way you get taught' [Zainab MI].*

Here again, as in the RCS, there is a connection between knowledge and faith.

In the MI school knowledge can potentially be seen to fill a gap in the student's home background. Many Muslim students saw their parents as encouraging religious practice, including the reading of the Qu'ran, but suggested that they felt less able to teach about the faith<sup>233234</sup>. This lack of confidence in imparting the faith was also noted by Raza (1991). Although the staff in the RCS school also commented on the lack of parental confidence in this area<sup>235</sup>, none of the students did so.

In the RCI school only one respondent<sup>236</sup> made a passing reference to the influence of teaching on their faith. Christian Theology was seen as an academic subject rather than connected to faith development, and the Christian Living programme, designed to synthesise the spiritual and the academic,<sup>237</sup> was not mentioned by the students.

In the two non-faith schools knowledge also played a small part in faith development, but in one case the RE teaching confused the student, requiring her to separate her beliefs from what she was taught. The problems caused by this dichotomy in home/school values are frequently cited by faith groups, particularly Evangelical Christian and Muslim groups, when justifying and arguing for separate schools (Everett, 2006; Freeman, 2001; Islamic Academy, 1990).

The school also was seen to increase religious practice, a response which was almost universal from those in the RCI school. In this school it was the daily

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<sup>233</sup> Yousef(MI)

<sup>234</sup> All of the students had attended supplementary religious schools.

<sup>235</sup> Deputy Head and Head of Year 10 (RCS)

<sup>236</sup> Mark(MI)

<sup>237</sup> Christian Living Teacher, Head of Christian Living (RCI)

routine of prayers and weekly House Mass and Sunday Mass which encouraged the students, something which was facilitated by the boarding nature of the school.

***Matthew** I think that because we go to mass on Sunday and we have house mass in the house I think that your faith becomes a lot stronger while you're here [...]and prayers every morning*

***HE** Is it the routine?*

***Matthew** Yeah I think it's routine but also the atmosphere as well. You feel like... I don't know .. more faith around here. '[Matthew RCI]*

Religious practice was also an important element throughout the MI school, but the school's influence was perceived as lower in this case, probably because it was seen to be merely reinforcing what had already been established, more effectively, at home.

*'Well they [parents] teach me manners, how to like pray at home, how to clean yourself before you pray and stuff like you can't do in school. Like in school they can show you how to like clean yourself before you pray but you can't do it physically. But at home your dad can take you to the bathroom and show you how to do it' [Ibrahim MI]*

The third category was the school environment, which was seen as important in both the MI and RCI schools, but also from a few responses in the ECI school. It could also be detected implicitly in the responses in the RCS school. The school was seen to provide a space where the students felt comfortable speaking about their faith and which allowed the faith part of them to be exposed.

*'it's like everyone's got the same views so you can also express what you feel more because you feel comfortable about talking about your faith in front of your friends' [Emily RCI]*



Some students were more aware of this through experiences in non-faith schools where they had felt more restricted in this regard<sup>238</sup>, a student response which was also evident in Moulin's (2011) study exploring the experiences of religious students in non-faith schools. Peer influence and the creation of a sense of community, from being around like-minded people, were also deemed important.

*'And when I came to this school and was surrounded by an Islamic environment everything around me just Islamic and then the school grew more Islamic '[Suliman MI]*

*'Well being around another 200 or mostly Christians it's just like a sense of community really' [Luke ECI].*

Unlike the other three faith schools where the school's influence was generally seen to strengthen the faith, this was not the case in the ECI school. This was partly because the provision in the school was being compared to that available elsewhere in the church, specifically the youth groups, which were seen as more effective at faith development. It might also have been related to the high level of congruence between home, school and church, which meant that the school was merely reinforcing what was there, so this aspect of school would not have registered in the minds of the students. The students saw any positive impact on faith by the school as being made either through increasing knowledge, or providing a faith environment. However, the majority of the respondents saw the school as having no real impact on their faith, and even in one case, as having a detrimental effect<sup>239</sup>. Sarah described how she felt that the religious aspect infusing the curriculum was 'too much':

*'Too much is when they bring it in to lessons, just totally unrelated, like they somehow bring it into history or our English lesson' [Sarah ECI]*

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<sup>238</sup> Luke(ECI);Emily(RCI)

<sup>239</sup> Sarah(ECI)

Parents were seen by students to be the most significant influence on their faith. Faith schools had an influence on the students' faith and religious identity, but the way that the students saw this happening varied between schools. Three ways in which the school affected the students' faith were detected; through the creation of an environment where faith could be discussed and which allowed space for this aspect of their identity, though encouraging practice, and through giving the students knowledge about their faith.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has considered, from the student's perspective, whether the schools (including the non-faith schools) might impact on their students' attitudes of tolerance through the formation of a religious (social) identity, as well as the extent to which the school is involved in the creation of the social identity. The school's role in the formation of the religious identity was shown to be complex, with student responses indicating that attendance at a faith school does not necessarily increase identification with the faith.

Faith school students did consider that their school had influenced their faith formation, usually in a positive way, but parents were seen as the major influence. This supports the view expressed by some of the schools (see Chapter 4) that the school was reinforcing the identity established at home, rather than creating it. The three main areas of school influence identified by students were: teaching, practice and producing an environment where students felt open about expressing their faith. Differences between the schools emerged around which of these areas were most influential in each school. Often the areas which the students commented on reflected the emphasis observed in the school. For example in the RCS school there was little emphasis on practice, but more on the use of teaching, which could be seen from the student responses. But sometimes the students did not perceive influence in areas which their school regarded as being strong. For example in the MI school, practice, which was considered important by the school, was not mentioned by the students. One possible explanation might be that the students do not register the school's influence when it is reinforcing what is normal in the home.

In respect of predicting the students' attitudes of tolerance, the schools were compared on four criteria which, if satisfied, according to Social Identity Theory, would indicate that the students might use the strategy of social competition to achieve a positive group identity. As part of that, schools were also compared on the extent to which the students were using their personal or their social identities. The analysis for each school is summarised in the table below (table 5.7).

The analysis suggests that none of the schools would influence their students so that they would inevitably show out-group discrimination on account of their social group membership. The RCI and RCS schools were seen to be very similar to each other and to the NFS and NFI schools, which indicates that the students would show similar attitudes of tolerance. In Chapter 4 questions were raised over whether the ECI students actually saw their faith as impermeable, but the ECI student responses gave no indication that this was the case. Their responses in this chapter reinforce and support the degree of similarity between the ECI school and the Roman Catholic schools in respect of religious identity formation, thus suggesting that the attitudes of tolerance of the students in the ECI school would be similar to those in the Roman Catholic and non-faith schools.

However, the analysis of the data highlighted a number of differences between the MI school and the other schools. When compared to the other schools the students in the MI school showed the highest use of their group identity. This was not constant, but this identity was often used in non context-specific situations, indicating that they were further towards the inter-group end of Tajfel's inter-personal/inter-group continuum than any of the other school students (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

The students in the MI school appeared to be forming an identity different in character from those in the other schools. Strong identification with their faith was universal in students of the MI school, at a level not found in any other school. In addition the MI school students saw themselves as distinct from their peers in mainstream society, with little recognition of any overlap in lifestyles. The picture which emerged was one of a distinctive identity, with tight boundaries defined by right belief and religious practice, indicating elements of a prototype. An obvious

out-group was less clearly defined, but two arguably overlapping groups could be detected; 'non-proper' Muslim and non-Muslim. This out-group was particularly connected to behaviour seen to contravene Islamic teachings. There was little indication that the students understood there to be any choice regarding their faith, and thus the group, for most of the students, was seen as impermeable. Therefore, in the MI school the criteria which indicate the adoption of the social competition strategy were all fulfilled to some extent.

In the case of the MI school students, a perceived threat to the religious identity was detected. The link between Islam and terrorism was raised by the majority of the students, and they did see themselves as being under suspicion, as Muslims. Whether this was strong enough to invoke social competition is unclear and cannot be determined theoretically. But it does suggest that the MI school students might show discrimination on account of their group membership, and that if this were so the most likely object of that discrimination would be either non-Muslims or 'non-proper' Muslims, where this latter group relates to Muslims who do not subscribe to the same practice as the in-group.

Compared to the students in the other schools, these differences taken together indicate that there is a higher likelihood that the MI students would employ the strategy of social competition to achieve a positive group identity, and thus they would be more likely to show intolerance towards the relevant out-group. In this case the out-group was ill-defined, but would seem to be 'non-proper' Muslim and/or non-Muslim. There was no indication that the strategy of social bias would be employed by the students in the other schools on account of their religious identity. However, the school's role in the formation of the religious identity could not always be clearly established in this chapter.

In Chapter 4 a hypothesis was generated which related the religious identity (in particular the way it was portrayed and understood within a school) to the students' attitudes of tolerance. It is now possible to modify that hypothesis and resolve the two outstanding issues. First, an object of tolerance has been identified: 'non-proper' Muslim and non-Muslim. Second, the way that the religious identity was portrayed by the ECI school and the way that it was formed have been shown to be similar to those in the RCI, RCS, NFI and NFS schools. Thus one would predict

there to be very little difference between the attitudes of tolerance shown by the students in these schools. It is also possible to incorporate the non-faith schools within the hypothesis. Therefore the final hypothesis in respect of the effect of the schools on their students' attitudes of tolerance through the religious identity aspect of the school is:

- ***Hypothesis E: The students in the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS schools will show similar attitudes of tolerance, and the MI school students will show lower attitudes of tolerance towards non-Muslims and 'non-proper' Muslims due to their religious (social) identity***

The next chapter will now consider how the students perceive their educational experience.

### Comparison of Schools on Social Identity Theory Indicators

		Social Competition Indicators			
School	Use of personal or group identity	Identification with religious group	Degree of distinction compared with peers in wider society	Group permeability	Perceived out-group and group threats
RCI	Predominantly personal identity used Context-specific use of religious identity GROUP USE LOW	High general identification LOW PRIMARY IDENTIFICATION 5/6 <sup>240</sup>	NO SIGNIFICANT DISTINCTION (Inclusivist/pluralist theology) No prototype able to be determined	PERMEABLE	None
RCS	Predominantly personal identity used GROUP USE LOW	Moderate general identification LOW PRIMARY IDENTIFICATION 4/6	NO SIGNIFICANT DISTINCTION (Inclusivist/pluralist theology) No prototype able to be determined	PERMEABLE	Area- weak and contextual
ECI	Personal identity predominantly used, but some wider, non-context specific use of religious identity GROUP USE LOW/MEDIUM	High general identification MODERATE PRIMARY IDENTIFICATION 3/6	NO SIGNIFICANT DISTINCTION (exclusivist theology) No prototype able to be determined	PERMEABLE	Non Christian, ill-defined and weak
MI	Personal identity mainly used, but frequent use of non-context specific religious identity GROUP USE MEDIUM	High general identification 1/6 UNIVERSAL PRIMARY IDENTIFICATION 1/6	LITTLE OVERLAP SEEN. SIGNIFICANT DISTINCTION (Exclusivist theology) Prototype able to be determined	IM-PERMEABLE	Non-proper or non-practising Muslims. Non-Muslims, related to behaviour and belief considered non-Islamic

<sup>240</sup> Indicates position compared to the other schools based on % agreeing 1= highest identification

NFI	Predominantly personal identity used GROUP USE LOW	Moderate general identification 6/6 LOW PRIMARY IDENTIFICATION 6/6	NO SIGNIFICANT DISTINCTION No prototype able to be determined	n/a	Lower education - weak and contextual
NFS	Predominantly personal identity used GROUP USE LOW	Moderate general identification MODERATE PRIMARY IDENTIFICATION 2/6	NO SIGNIFICANT DISTINCTION No prototype able to be determined	n/a	Social class-weak and contextual

Table 5.7

## **Chapter 6: The Students' Experience of School**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This is the final chapter in which the analysis of the school data is presented. In this chapter, as in Chapter 5, it is the interview and questionnaire data relating to students' perceptions of their school which are being analysed, although the focus is now on how tolerance might be affected through the educational aspects of the school. As discussed in the previous two chapters, the analysis of the data will lead to the generation of hypotheses. Unlike the previous chapter, in which separating the school's influence from strong external ones was problematic at times, the data in this chapter allow a direct link to be made more readily to the school.

The analysis of the data uses the three themes which relate to the way that education was seen to affect tolerance, as detailed in Chapter 4. In the first section, Contact, the degree to which the students report themselves as having contact with and learning about the Other is considered. The section on Cognitive Sophistication focuses on the extent to which the students see that their school allows and encourages them to make their own choices, as well as their perception of the classroom and school environment. This includes the extent to which they feel that they are encouraged to debate issues and express their own views and opinions. It also explores what choices the students see themselves able to make about their faith. Included in that discussion is who or what the students see as sources of authority, and how that authority is viewed. In the final section, Socialisation, the extent to which the schools are seen as promoting diversity is considered. This chapter ends by incorporating into the provisional hypotheses generated in Chapter 4 the insights gained from the analysis of the students' perspective of the way that education impacts on tolerance.

### **6.2 Contact**

It was noted in Chapter 4 that all the faith schools reported some direct teaching about, or contact with, people of other faiths. But the extent to which the students themselves registered this, or felt that this was sufficient preparation for the society in which they live, was not discussed. The fact that the students may



have limited opportunity to mix with other faiths within school does not exclude the possibility of contact occurring in a variety of external school contexts. Thus it is pertinent to gauge the level of contact in all areas of their life, and this is where this discussion begins.

In the questionnaire (Section C: Appendix A) the students were asked to indicate if they had friends from ethnic and religious groups other than their own.

% of students reporting that they have friends from		
School	Ethnic groups other than their own	Religious groups other than their own
RCI	70	63
RCS	83	49
ECI	38	42
MI	93	77
NFI	88	88
NFS	95	95

Table 6.1: Student inter-group friendships.

As discussed in Chapter 4, with the exception of the ECI school, all the schools in the research had ethnically diverse populations. The lower level of ethnic diversity in the ECI school was seen to reflect the lower degree of ethnic diversity in the local area, rather than being the result of any school policy (Appendix J). The data (table 6.1) indicate that the students have a high incidence of contact with students from other ethnic groups, apart from the ECI school. It was noted that all the schools, with the exception of the RCI, reflected the ethnic diversity of the local area, and therefore the students' inter-ethnic friendships could be from school or outside school. Although the RCI school is situated in a mono-cultural area this does not reflect the students' home backgrounds, with many of the RCI students living in multi-ethnic areas.

Inter-religious friendships were lower among faith school students compared with those in the non-faith schools. As discussed (Chapter 4), selection policies in all the faith schools favoured their respective faith groups. In the MI and ECI schools no other religious groups were present, and in the RCI and RCS schools there were few students who were not from a Christian tradition. Any inter-

religious friendships of faith school students therefore would have originated outside the school. Despite attending a school segregated on the grounds of faith, over two-fifths of the students, and about 50% of those based in London, said that they interacted with a person of another faith<sup>241</sup>. So although inter-religious friendship might have been restricted within schools, in many cases this appeared to be compensated for outside school. Proponents of Muslim schools, such as the Muslim Council of Britain, highlight this point, maintaining that those who oppose faith schools fail to take account of contact and friendships occurring outside the school context (Rizvi, 2007).

As with inter-ethnic friendship, the potential for inter-religious friendship also depends on the geographical context. The ECI school indicated a low level of inter-religious friendships, but the school area statistics (Appendix J) for this school showed a very low percentage of faiths other than Christianity, and therefore students in other schools in the area may have also shown low levels of inter-religious friendships. However, although the area statistics for the RCS and MI schools showed similar levels of other faiths, the schools exhibited very different percentages of inter-religious friendships, thus it is hard to explain this difference by recourse to area differences alone.

A point of caution needs to be raised in respect of this data. Some variation in the data may have been due to differences in the way that the students interpreted the notion of 'religious group'. For example, the ECI students may have counted Anglicans and Roman Catholics in the Other category, whereas the Roman Catholic students may only have counted non-Christian friends. This may explain the higher proportion of 'other religious friends' compared with 'other ethnic group friends' in the ECI school. It may also explain some of the difference seen between the inter-religious friendships of the RCS and MI students, in that the MI students considered any non-Muslim contact as being contact with another faith, whereas the RCS students only considered contact if it was with someone clearly

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<sup>241</sup> These results included all pupils regardless of whether they held a religious belief. If only religious students were considered little variation was seen between the two sets of results.

recognisable to them as a member of another faith<sup>242</sup>. Even with these interpretive problems the data were still informative and helpful in building up a picture of the degree of contact with an Other that the students saw themselves as having.

With one exception<sup>243</sup>, in all the interviews the students of all the schools were positive about learning about other faiths, seeing value in it (discussed further in Chapter 7.4.2.a). Pupils in all the faith schools commented on learning about other faiths at some point during their schooling, although the emphasis was clearly on learning about their own faith<sup>244</sup>. In the RCI, RCS and ECI schools specific modules in which teaching about other faiths occurred were mentioned<sup>245</sup>, with Islam and Judaism being the most commonly learnt about faiths in these Christian schools. In the MI school the students commented that other faiths were occasionally mentioned. When this happened they were either referred to in comparison with Islam, or as an occasional lesson, rather than being discussed as a separate topic<sup>246</sup>. Yasmin, discussing the lessons, says:

*'like in RE you'd know about other religions yeah' ..... ' We don't really study it as a whole, but we like take one lesson or something. '[Yasmin MI]*

Some students in the RCI, RCS and MI schools felt that their school should provide more teaching on other faiths<sup>247</sup>, principally relating this to living in a multicultural society and needing to understand those around them.

*'I think we should learn more about Judaism or Islam 'cause it like prepares you better for going out into the world. You have to meet new people, you have to get on with them. If you don't understand the way they live you won't understand them.'* [Gregory RCI]

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<sup>242</sup> This could be denoted in many ways for example through dress, ethnicity or language, and may of course not be a true reflection.

<sup>243</sup> Suliman(MI)

<sup>244</sup> Saira,Hussain,Yousef,Zainab,Noor (MI); Gregory, Matt (RCI); Katie,Louisa(NFS),Anna,Sarah,Ben,Esther,Rebecca (ECI); Pippa, Anthony, Alicia(NFI); Grace,Hannah,Jennifer (RCS)

<sup>245</sup> Esther, Ben (ECI); Gregory, Matt (RCI); Hannah(RCS)

<sup>246</sup> Zainab, Saira, Suliman, Yasmin(NI)

<sup>247</sup> Gregory, Matt (RCI); Yousef, Hussain(MI)

This concern is reflected in the questionnaire data (table 6.2 below), where these three schools have the lowest percentage of students agreeing that school has helped them understand those with different beliefs.

School	% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement 'In school I have learnt to understand people who have different beliefs'
RCI	57
RCS	58
ECI	71
MI	57
NFI	91
NFS	90

Table 6.2: Student perceptions of learning about other beliefs.

In the MI school one pupil commented that he and some other students had tried to have the amount of teaching about other faiths increased, but that the school had not sanctioned it, although the school did say that other religions were not disapproved of.

**Yousef** *This school has taught about other religions we done it in RS and we do learn a bit, a few things but we are trying to influence the teachers to teach us more*

**HE** *Are you? Right.. you feel that you'd like to learn a bit more?*

**Yousef** *Yeah*

**HE** *And how far are you getting with that?*

**Yousef** *Not that far' [Yousef MI]*

The highest proportion of students feeling that they were learning about other faiths was found in the non-faith schools<sup>248</sup>, a finding corroborated by the questionnaire data. But even here one student raised concern that the concentration at GCSE on Islam and Christianity meant some other faiths were overlooked<sup>249</sup>, as can be seen in this extract:

<sup>248</sup> Louisa, Katie (NFS); Pippa, Georgina, Laura, Alicia, Anthony (NFI)

<sup>249</sup> Pippa (NFI)

*'I said can't we learn about all faiths because I do RS GCSE and um.. and we just learn about Christianity and Islam,[.....] my mum asked why don't we learn about Judaism and Buddhism and all of that. I know we learnt about that in year 7 but barely so I barely know anything about other religions and a lot of my friends don't know anything about Judaism they barely teach it at this school and so I think that's quite bad and I think that we should learn a bit more about everything, but my teacher told me that it's better to learn a couple of things in depth than a lot, but I'm not very .. I think that we should learn more.'* [Pippa NFI]

In the faith schools the provision for meeting members of other faiths was very limited. Students in both RCS and MI schools mentioned members of other faiths coming into school and talking to them about their respective faiths<sup>250</sup>. This was seen as a worthwhile and instructive experience. Talking about a visit from a Christian lady and a Jewish lady, Yasmin's response shows the benefits of such a link:

*'Yeah it was really interesting to see what type of religion they have and how it's quite similar to Islam in some ways'*

and she went on to say that she had learnt

*'lots of things that I didn't know'* [Yasmin MI]

No provision was seen to exist in any of the faith schools for students to meet students of other faiths, something which was also noted in Chapter 4.

In the non-faith schools no student mentioned the school making any provision for inter-religious contact or dialogue outside RE. Nevertheless the diversity inherent in the school seemed to enable the students to interact and, contrary to what the Head of RE felt, in the NFI school the students did feel that in

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<sup>250</sup> Yasmin .(MI), Hannah (RCS)

RE they interacted with their peers on the basis of faith, although this appeared to be restricted to within RE lessons<sup>251</sup>:

*'in RS 'cause there's a lot of debating going on and everyone is always discussing saying what they believe personally' [Laura NFI]*

*'The only time it would like come up in school is when we'd be discussing in religious studies and I'd like say well I believe this blah blah blah and I go church and do this.' [Georgina NFI]*

Whether these interactions reached the level of understanding others' faith as a lived reality is still questionable, but the students perceived that they were learning about faith in this way. In these non-faith schools the students saw themselves both learning about religions formally from school, but also school being a place where they encountered the Other in their daily life. The feasibility of such encounters depended on these schools being in an ethnically, religiously and culturally diverse locality. This is not the case for many schools, whether faith or non-faith, in England today.

% students agreeing or strongly agreeing			
School	In school I have learned to understand people who have different ideas	In school I have learned to be concerned about what happens in other countries	I feel this school is preparing me well for a multicultural society
RCI	57	74	54
RCS	56	67	52
ECI	71	83	46
MI	50	91	67
NFI	91	78	73
NFS	90	74	61

Table 6.3: Students' perceptions of learning about others.

<sup>251</sup> Hugh, Georgina, Laura (NFI)

Learning about the Other can also be achieved through aspects of schooling other than specific teaching. In the questionnaire the students were asked about how well they saw their school as preparing them to interact in a wider context than the school environment<sup>252</sup>. These questions can be seen to include the Religious Other, although not explicitly specifying them. The data above (table 6.3) show a fairly mixed pattern, although the non-faith schools tended to show the highest responses, and there appears to be little consistency across the three questions. This situation was also seen across the country responses in the case of the IEA data, although no explanation was suggested for this lack of consistency (Torney-Purta, 2001).

Average Likert Scores			
School	In school I have learned to understand people who have different ideas	In school I have learned to be concerned about what happens in other countries	I feel this school is preparing me well for a multicultural society
RCI	3.7**	3.8	3.1**
RCS	3.8	3.7	3.5
ECI	3.7	3.9	3.2
MI	4.2	4.2**	3.8
NFI	4.2	3.9	3.8
NFS	4.0	3.8	3.6

\*\* significance at 1% level; Reference school: NFS

Table 6.4: Average Likert Scores for the students' perceptions of learning about others.

The average Likert scores (table 6.4) indicate that there were few significant differences between the schools. Therefore a great deal of similarity can be seen between students in their perceptions of the extent to which their schools prepared them for life in the wider world and, by extension, helped them interact with an Other. There were two exceptions to this. A particularly high percentage of students in the MI school considered that their school was good at teaching them to be concerned about what happens in other countries. On the other hand a

<sup>252</sup> These questions were taken from the IEA Civic Education Study 1999 (Torney-Purta, 2001). Direct comparison of scores cannot be made as a different Likert scales were employed.

particularly low proportion of the students in the RCI school believed that their school was preparing them well to live in a multicultural society, and to understand people with different ideas.

However, in the MI school 'other countries' might have specifically been interpreted as Islamic countries or countries with majority Muslim populations, in particular those where there is conflict, rather than a broader understanding of this term. This link to the political may have increased the topicality of this aspect of the school's teaching, making it more prominent for the students.

The students in the RCI school come from quite cosmopolitan backgrounds, many having family in the forces, government or diplomatic service which means that they might be more regularly exposed to debate and discussion of other cultures at home, and consequently may not have perceived the school as increasing their experience in this area. A similar observation was made by Germ Janmaat (2008b) when looking at the effectiveness of Citizenship programmes. He found a disproportionate effect which depended on the level of student background exposure to certain issues. The crucial factor here appears to have been the degree of difference between their home and school experience, a comparison effect. On the other hand, it might have been due to the RCI school giving the students less opportunity to learn about the Other, exacerbated by the isolated situation of the school, providing fewer opportunities for interaction within the vicinity. Indeed in Chapter 4.3 the socio-economically segregated nature of this school was highlighted as an aspect that might impact negatively on the students' attitudes of tolerance, leading to the formation of a hypothesis on this point. These data could be seen as supporting that provisional hypothesis.

Analysis of the questionnaire data and interviews indicated three key points. The first was that students in the faith schools were likely to be less informed about, and have had fewer opportunities to interact with, those of other faiths than their non-faith school peers. The second was that attendance at a faith school did not mean that the students did not have inter-religious friendships, although these originated outside school. Finally (the RCI school being the exception) the numbers of students in the faith schools who did not feel that their school prepared them



well to interact with others, was not significantly different from students in the non-faith schools.

### 6.3 Cognitive Sophistication

The questionnaire included a section of items based on those used in the IEA study (Nelson, Wade and Kerr, 2010; Torney-Purta, 2001), but which included some additional questions which specifically considered the way in which religious issues were discussed. This addition means that no direct comparison can be made to the IEA study.

The responses from each of the eight questions in section D part 2 (Classroom Climate) of the questionnaire were added together and calculated for each student, and subsequently a mean score per school was obtained (maximum total = 40.). A higher score indicated a more open classroom climate. This score was then regressed, using linear regression, with NFS as the reference school. (Technical details are given in Appendix K).

School	Classroom Climate (Mean score)
NFS	28
RCI	29
RCS	28
ECI	30
MI	30 *
NFI	30 **

\*\* significance at 1% level; \* at 5% level; Reference school: NFS

Table 6.5: Students' perception of their school's classroom climate.

No significant difference can be seen between the NFS school and the RCI, RCS and ECI schools, indicating that students at these schools all saw their schools as having similar classroom climates (table 6.5). Compared with the NFS school a significantly more open classroom climate was perceived by the students in the MI and NFI schools.

The interview data did however show some contradictions in this area. In the non-faith schools the students generally saw themselves as being able to express their own opinions freely<sup>253</sup>. Louisa's response is quite typical.

*'I think, I think that we're quite free to sort of discuss different things. Like um... we were discussing Christianity with a boy who's very religious and there were a couple of us who weren't religious at all and we were quite open about it and.. and ... and there wasn't really anything stopping us.'* [Louisa NFS]

Staff were not seen to restrict debate, although some references were made to peer pressure, and a degree of reluctance to voice opinions. Sometimes this was due to lack of confidence in the clarity of the argument they were trying to make<sup>254</sup>, or through fear of looking a fool<sup>255</sup>. Only in one response was reference made to staff silencing dissent<sup>256</sup>. The students in the non-faith schools who expressed a faith saw that this choice was very much their own<sup>257</sup>.

In the faith schools some variation was seen, and the difference was particularly noticeable again between the MI and the other faith schools. In the RCI, RCS and ECI schools the students felt able to express their views openly, considering that there were few restrictions on views, and seeing debate as part of school life. In the RCI school the academic nature of Christian Theology was considered to be beneficial in the way that it did not require a confessional response<sup>258</sup>:

*'I think it's a good system because we go to church every Sunday and pray and that is kept very separate. If we went to Christian Theology and we were told "Jesus does exist. You will, you must pray five times a day.. you must read the Bible" I think that would be a bad system.'*  
[Mark RCI]

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<sup>253</sup> Charlotte,Hassan,Louisa,Chantelle,Michael (NFS); Laura,Georgina,Pippa,Anthony,Hugh (NFI)

<sup>254</sup> Michael(NFS)

<sup>255</sup> Matt(RCI),Sarah(ECI)

<sup>256</sup> Charlotte(NFS)

<sup>257</sup> Laura,Pippa,Georgina,Hugh (NFI); Chantelle,Hassan(NFS)

<sup>258</sup> Jon,Mark(RCI)

*'I've never been asked a question which demands an answer from a Christian... which demands an answer from a believing, a believing um.. religious, deeply religious view. ' [Jon RCI]*

Within the RCI, RCS and ECI schools the choice to follow the faith or not was seen by the students to rest with them. Conscience was seen to be allowed for in acts of worship<sup>259</sup>. In the ECI school non-participation was not only allowed, but seemed to become an act of resistance or an exercise of power against the religious environment:

*'sometimes in assemblies if there's worship going on not many people join in and think it cool to not act like a Christian' [Anna ECI]*

The peer pressure not to participate was also noted by the staff in the ECI school, who expressed concern that it was having a detrimental effect on the students' faith, with some who wanted to join in being dissuaded from doing so by the actions of the older 'cool' students<sup>260</sup>. A few students in the RCS and ECI schools commented on feeling a pressure to conform, either to the faith group's views or to being a Christian more generally<sup>261</sup>. In all these cases the students did also acknowledge that the school allowed them to make their own choices, as Luke's comment below illustrates.

*'It's more like they prefer us to be Christians but they [the school] leave the choice up to us' [Luke ECI]*

In a number of the student interviews the students' perception of the choices open to them often seemed to be related to individual teachers, rather than being seen as a whole school approach. That the teachers would teach from a position of religious belief was not questioned, but whether that view was, or was

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<sup>259</sup> Harriet, Mark(RCI); Joseph(RCS)

<sup>260</sup> Laurence (ECI)

<sup>261</sup> Sarah, Luke(ECI); Joseph(RCS)

seen to be, their personal or the 'official' faith view varied. Challenging the teacher's views was usually permitted, as this extract from Hannah's interview suggests:

*'Hannah She [the teacher] does actually say it is my own view  
HE OK but you feel able to challenge that?  
Hannah Yeah! A lot of my friends do and they're not... I have similar  
views to [teacher name] so it's not a deal to me and then we'll just  
have debates across the class' [Hannah RCS]*

Only one interview indicated teachers restricting choice. In the interview Sarah sees certain teachers as allowing choice whilst others require conformity:

*'It's maybe teachers partially because they're quite strong in what they  
believe and I guess some of the teachers are quite understanding when  
you say what you think and others are just like.. they're just like "no  
that's wrong"... it's not necessarily wrong because it's our opinion'  
[Sarah ECI]*

The restriction of choice was not always considered in a negative way by the students. In the RCI school the daily routine of prayers was seen to be beneficial and helpful to their faith, rather than constricting<sup>262</sup>. This resonates with a comment made by a student in the NFI school who expressed unease at being left to make her own decisions, as she saw it, without guidance from either her parents or teachers, as in this response:

*'...if my RS teacher told me this thing is right and this is wrong then she  
would probably ... get fired or something because I say to her "but  
Miss which is right?" and she says "I can't tell you because everyone  
has different views" and she has to be really really PC about that kind  
of thing which I'm not really sure that that's a good thing that's  
happened. That you don't know so I can learn something and not know  
what's right' [Pippa NFI]*

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<sup>262</sup> Gregory, Harriet (RCI)

In the MI school interviews few references were made to the use of debate in lessons, although one student did comment that she felt able to express views which were different from the majority of views in the class<sup>263</sup>. Instead, students referred to being taught, as Ibrahim's response below suggests. But the extract also shows an interesting contrast between the RCS and the MI school. Whereas in the RCS school Danny spoke of the school allowing more opportunities to express opinions and form views than was the case in his primary school, in the MI school Ibrahim saw the teaching as being stricter at this level.

*'I think primary was more lenient. They was [sic] more lenient in their teaching. It was like slowly slowly step by step but when you get to secondary over here you get taught more and more and more and you begin and your brain begins to switch and start tending you like how doing this could be bad and doing this could be bad as well.'* [Ibrahim MI]

*'Yeah I think I in primary school like 'cause I went to a Catholic primary school like you are to believe that God and Jesus they were like real and I've taken that on from like secondary school, but in secondary school like it's different. If you like take your own opinions that's when you like gain you really understanding about what's going on and like your own opinions'* [Danny RCS]

The perception of the MI students that their school operated an open classroom climate (appearing more open than the RCI, RCS, ECI and NFS schools) was not borne out in the interview data. Instead, the MI interviews indicated that the students had the least opportunity for discussion and debate. Here, as was seen in the case of the RCI school (Section 6.2), a possible explanation for the contradiction relates to the degree of comparison between home and school. The RCI school's use of debate was only continuing what was seen as normal. In the MI school it is possible that the classroom climate was more open than their background

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<sup>263</sup> Saira(MI)

experience, and hence the judgements made were relative. A comparison of the average Rokeach score, which measures the degree of authoritarianism, lends some support to this interpretation, as do some of the comments by the Head of the MI school.

School	Average Rokeach score	Standard deviation
RCI n=92	79	15.0
RCS n=81	81	17.5
ECI n=23	71	15.0
MI n=42	81	16.5
NFI n=79	72	13.7
NFS n=106	74	16.3

Table 6.6: Average Rokeach score.

The MI and RCS school students displayed the highest average Rokeach scores<sup>264</sup> (table 6.6), suggesting that their backgrounds were among the most authoritarian. Thus debate and the challenging of views and opinions were less likely to be experienced in the backgrounds of these students. A further difference, which distinguished the RCS from the MI school, was related to the fact that many of the MI students' parents were not born in the UK. The Head saw this as leading to large cultural gaps between the MI students and their parents, so large in some cases that the students could barely relate to their parents<sup>265</sup>. This suggests a situation in which the MI school operated more towards the students' world, whilst still retaining some connection with the parental culture, and thus could be seen to act as a bridge between these worlds. Bryk et al. (1993) make a similar point in their discussion about the role of Roman Catholic schools in the USA in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this context the school could be seen

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<sup>264</sup> These scores measure the authoritarian personality and can be used as a proxy for authoritarian background. The higher the score the more authoritarian the student (see Chapter 3 and Appendix C).

<sup>265</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

as less constricting than the home, which meant that the students perceived the school as having a more open classroom climate.

### 6.3.1 Faith, Choice and Authority

Chapter 5.5 briefly discussed choice in respect of whether the students saw their faith as permeable or able to be rejected. In this section the degree of choice that the students felt that they had in matters of faith is discussed, as this is a further aspect of cognitive development. This section does not focus on the school's role, but rather on whether there were any differences between the schools in the way that the students saw choice. Sources of authority are also discussed, as these relate to the choices that the students saw as being available to them.

In the RCI, RCS and ECI schools the students either saw that they themselves had made the choice to follow a particular faith<sup>266</sup>, or that the choice had been made by their parents<sup>267</sup>. None of the students in these schools saw faith as a prescribed set of rules, as Danny and Luke indicate:

*'when you're a kid you feel like you have to make your Holy Communion [.....] you think you have to pray and do all that stuff but you don't really' [Danny RCS]*

*'Luke There are several like crazy, well not crazy, strange laws in the Bible like not eating pigs [.....] all the un-cleanliness...*

*HE But you don't follow those?*

*Luke No' [Luke ECI]*

Weekly attendance at Mass, other than compulsory school attendance, was the only element of faith that was referred to in any sort of obligatory manner, and this was more frequently discussed in the RCI than the RCS school. The ECI students made no comments about being obliged to go to church. The compulsion to attend Mass was seen to come from parents, not from any official religious authority or

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<sup>266</sup> Emily, Harriet, Jon (RCI); Anna, Luke, Laurence (ECI); Joseph, Hannah, Grace, Danny (RCS)

<sup>267</sup> Rhianna (RCS); Christina (RCI)

teaching, and was located in the past, as in Danny's response above. The current situation was presented as one where they themselves were active, autonomous participants<sup>268</sup>.

*'I would go through the motions. Go to church on a Sunday and while I would take communion it wouldn't really mean anything to me. If anything it was just to keep my mum happy... But now here you take a much more active role in the service every Sunday [.....] It means a lot more to me now, rather than a thing that just had to be done.'* [Mark RCI]

In the MI school only one student spoke about following Islam being her choice<sup>269</sup>. But more distinctive was the way that all the students referred to particular modes of behaviour and rules which were set down by Islam.

*'If you do your prayer late everyday there's no point of doing that you might as well not do it any at all if you're going to do them late and not be focused'* [Hussain MI]

*'...it's compulsory to wear hijab once you're the age when you know the difference between right and wrong '* [Zainab MI]

Difference could also be detected between the students in the way in which discussion and debate around religious issues were a part of their experience more generally. These differences became apparent when comparing responses to the interview question discussing what they thought happened to people not of their own faith when they died. The matter of interest is not the view, which has already been discussed (Chapter 5.3), but the way that they came to that view, and the way they reported that belief.

In the RCS and RCI schools most of the responses indicated, sometimes explicitly<sup>270</sup>, that they had not considered the issue. This may, to some extent, account for the unformulated nature of their responses. Yet, with a few

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<sup>268</sup> Jon, Mark, Gregory, Matt (RCI); Danny (RCS)

<sup>269</sup> Zainab (MI)

<sup>270</sup> Emily, Harriet (RCI)



exceptions<sup>271</sup>, the students were willing to give an opinion, and gave no impression that they were trying to reproduce an official church teaching. It appeared that they felt able to give their own view, and were not bound by any authority. The uncertainty is clearly evident in Hannah's response where, although a practising Roman Catholic, she does not refer to this as a source of authority.

*'I suppose different people would believe depending on their religious beliefs, personal beliefs are so I don't know....' [Hannah RCS]*

In the MI school the students' responses were clearly formulated, and their views were framed with reference to an authority, in this case Islam, rather than any suggestion that this might be the product of their own reasoning<sup>272</sup>. Views were often expressed in terms of the group identity, for example:

*'we [emphasis my own] believe that Allah rewards you through this life.' [Zainab MI].*

Suliman's response below, which was similar to those given by other students in the school, was that this was a belief that existed and was to be learnt, with no indication that there was any room for discussion or debate

*'Islam has taught that Islam is shown to everybody.' [.....]. 'In my religion it says that all Muslims will go to heaven ' [Suliman MI]*

The responses in the ECI school showed some similarity to those from the MI school, with the ECI students talking about being 'taught' the view, and referring to scripture as the source of this authority<sup>273</sup>. But whilst the teaching appeared to have been internalised at one level, voicing these beliefs raised questions in their minds. This suggests to me that questioning scripture and religious teaching was not anathema to them. Esther's response indicates this, in that she initially gives a

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<sup>271</sup> Rhys(RCS)

<sup>272</sup> Suliman,Zainab,Ibrahim,Noor(MI)

<sup>273</sup> Rebecca,Luke,Anna,Sarah,Ben(ECI)

fairly well formulated view, but then considers the possibility that this can and might change, and that this change would be her choice.

*'Esther [pause] I think that unless you're a Christian there's probably not a lot else after death yeah so.*

*HE So people of other faiths?*

*Esther Well, well ..... I suppose it's hell but I think that's.... I don't know.... it's something I'm thinking about myself so... it's quite extreme, hell seems quite extreme a place for people to go that just haven't believed in Christianity but I suppose that could be true'*  
*[Esther ECI]*

What some of these responses do possibly suggest is that in the case of the MI and ECI school students some beliefs were being passively accepted. But in the ECI school Esther's response indicates that questioning was allowed and that the choice was seen as hers, and hers alone, to make, something which was not evident in the MI school responses.

### 6.3.2 Sources of Authority

Related to choice is the notion of authority. Therefore consideration also needs to be given to who or what is seen to be a source of authority by the students, and how directive it is seen to be. Religion was a source of authority, or at least guidance, for the vast majority of students with a religious background in all the schools<sup>274</sup>. But differences could be seen, with the most interesting comparison being between the MI and ECI students. The variety of views on authority found in the two Roman Catholic<sup>275</sup> and the non-faith schools were all to be encountered within the ECI school responses.

In the ECI school all the students saw their religion as a source of authority, with this authority often seen as emanating from the Bible<sup>276</sup>. The Bible was seen as

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<sup>274</sup> Laura, Georgina(NFI); Hassan, Chantelle(NFS); Christina, Annabel, Jon(RCI); Anna, Sarah, Esther, Rebecca, Ben, Luke, Nick(ECI); Danny, Grace, Hannah(RCS); Suliman, Yousef, Hussain, Yasmin, Saira, Zainab, Noor(MI)

<sup>275</sup> Christina, Annabel, Jon, Mark(RCI); Danny, Joseph, Grace, Hannah(RCS); Laura, Georgina(NFI); Hassan, Chantelle(NFS)

<sup>276</sup> Esther, Nick, Luke, Rebecca(ECI)

a source, but not the only or complete source of moral authority<sup>277</sup> or truth. Science was the alternative source of evidence explicitly referred to<sup>278</sup>. The teachings in the Bible were seen by many as indications and guidance about what was right or wrong, rather than prescribed rules; a 'moral compass' as Hannah (RCS) described it, echoing the RCI mission statement. Bill's comment is similar to several responses:

*'Well.. when I kind of think of it it's [the Bible] not really there's standard rules it's not like that's right, that's right, that's right, that's wrong. ' [Bill ECI].*

The Bible and religious teachings were seen to act as a basis for some rules and laws found in wider British society<sup>279</sup>. There was no indication that the Bible was not able to be challenged, with Roman Catholic students from both schools discussing issues around biblical truth<sup>280</sup>. The issue of biblical truth did not come up in any of the ECI interviews.

For the MI students their religion was the ultimate source of moral authority, and was contained in the Qur'an, along with the Hadith and the Sunnah<sup>281</sup>. As Suliman explained, although he might use other sources, such as experience, ultimately Islam told him everything:

*'in my religion [Islam] everything has been told to us in life, what's right, what's wrong has been told to us any time I have a doubt is this right is this wrong then I contemplate. If I can't find the answer like common knowledge like I refer to my religion and see what I can find out from my religion' [Suliman MI]*

A similar sentiment was expressed by Yousef :

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<sup>277</sup> Ben, Esther, Nick (ECI); Annabel, Jon (RCI); Hannah (RCS)

<sup>278</sup> Joseph (RCS); Sarah (ECI)

<sup>279</sup> Mark (RCI); Luke (ECI)

<sup>280</sup> Jon (RCI); Laura (NFI); Danny (RCS)

<sup>281</sup> Yasmin (MI)

*'As long as I've got Islam with me then I'm fine. It's all I need' [Yousef MI].*

One interview referred to sources of moral authority as existing outside Islam<sup>282</sup>. There was no evidence that other beliefs were not considered moral, as Noor's response below indicates, but rather that Islamic teaching encompassed all moral teaching. In the following extract Noor has been talking about her moral and religious beliefs and explains that:

*'Like someone [...] could not have the same religion as me but have the same moral values' [Noor MI]*

The students saw the authority of Islam expressed as explicit rules to be followed<sup>283</sup>, which contrasts with the situation above where the religious teachings were seen more as guidance, a 'moral compass' (Hannah RCS). No challenge to the Qur'an, the principal source of authority, could be permitted<sup>284</sup>.

The students in the RCS, RCI and ECI schools saw themselves as exercising choice in respect of their faith. Neither was their religion – the religious teachings or religious authority – seen as their only source of authority but rather as a source of guidance. While this section does not make reference to the school's role, nevertheless the students' responses were consistent with the data in Chapter 4 (sections 4.3-5) which saw these three schools as promoting choice and encouraging critical examination of the faith.

The majority of the MI school students viewed their faith as a set of rules or obligations, and as the sole source of moral authority and, as such, choice was restricted. The role of the school in the formation of this view cannot be commented on, although this was again consistent with the data in Chapter 4.6.

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<sup>282</sup> Noor(MI)

<sup>283</sup> Yasmin,Zainab,Ibrahim(MI)

<sup>284</sup> Yasmin(MI)

## 6.4 Socialisation

The last aspect to be discussed here is the socialisation effect of the school. Did the students perceive the school to be promoting positive relations with other faiths and groups? Here there is some overlap with the religious identity aspect of the school, in that both are concerned with faith, but in this section the focus is on direct teaching about how the students should relate to others, rather than any inculcation of belief. In Section 6.2 (tables 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4) the extent to which the school was seen to have taught the students about the Other was discussed. The same data can also be used as an indicator of whether the students perceived the school as being positive about diversity, in the sense that learning about the Other suggests that this is being done in a positive, supportive manner. An aggregate score of the four questions (D1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5) was produced, as principal component analysis indicated that this was appropriate in this case (Appendix K). The maximum score was 20 and thus a socialisation score of greater than 10 indicated that the students saw their school as promoting positive relations with other groups.

School	Mean aggregated Socialisation score
RCI N= 98	14.0**
RCS N=85	14.5**
ECI N=24	14.2**
MI N=43	15.5
NFI N=125	16.0
NFS N=84	15.5

\*\* Significant at the 1% level; Reference school: NFS

Table 6.7: Mean school socialisation score

When the mean aggregated socialisation scores were regressed, using the NFS as the reference school, the ECI, RCS and RCI schools were found to be perceived by their students as less effectively promoting diversity when compared

with the students' perceptions in the other three schools (table 6.7). Although significant differences existed between the schools, all the schools had an aggregate score greater than 12, indicating that even in the RCI, RCS and ECI schools the majority of the students perceived their schools as promoting diversity, with none of the student interviews indicating that a negative image was being given. Therefore, despite significant differences between schools in this area, the data did not indicate that the schools were negatively impacting the students in this area.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has looked at how the students perceive the three educational aspects of the school which might impact on tolerance (cognitive sophistication, socialisation and contact). The analysis of the student data suggested that the students' perspective of the school is often formed relative to other familiar contexts, such as their home environment. In several instances the interview responses showed little variation between the schools, but significant differences were apparent in the qualitative data, a contradiction which can be related, in part, to differences in the group against which the students were comparing the school.

Overall, the students' perceptions of their educational experience showed a high degree of similarity. The school which showed the greatest degree of distinctiveness was again the MI school. But in this school there was a contradiction between the MI student interview data and the questionnaire data. Whereas the interview data indicated that aspects of the school might be negatively impacting on tolerance, the questionnaire data indicated that the MI students saw the school as increasing their experiences and knowledge about the Other and the world, often to a greater extent than some of the other schools. The questionnaire would therefore suggest that the school was positively impacting on tolerance. However, this contradiction is probably due to the comparison effect referred to above, in which the MI school was perceived by some students to be providing a more open climate than they experienced outside school.

Each of the three aspects of the school which could impact on tolerance will now be discussed, and the hypotheses generated in Chapter 4 will be modified, if necessary, in the light of the analysis presented in this chapter.

### **Contact**

There was no indication that students in the faith schools were developing fewer inter-ethnic or inter-religious friendships than their peers. Therefore what the analysis in this chapter indicated was that the segregated nature of the schooling was not detrimentally affecting the ability of these students to make inter-religious friendships in contexts outside school.

However, the analysis did support the suggestion that the faith schools were not providing opportunities for students to interact with those of other faiths, although most of the students felt that they had been taught about, and been given knowledge of, other faiths. In the NFI school, in contrast with the view of the Head of RE, the students did see themselves interacting with people of other faiths at an emotional level within the school. This calls into question the similarity in tolerance between the NFI and the faith schools. However, apart from during RE, the NFI student responses did indicate that in this school faith was generally placed within the private sphere, and thus the extent of any emotional interaction is questionable. Both the questionnaire and interview responses of the students in the NFS school supported the view given in Chapter 4 that this school promoted contact in all its forms, including emotional interactions, between its students and those of other faiths (and no faith). Therefore, although with some reservations in the NFI school case, this hypothesis (Hypothesis A) remains as it was and becomes the first hypothesis:

- ***Hypothesis I: The students in the RCI, RCS, ECI, MI and NFI schools will show lower attitudes of tolerance towards those of other faiths than towards other groups due to the lack of contact with other faiths that the school provides. The tolerance shown will be similar across the RCI, RCS, ECI, MI and NFI schools, but will be lower than that shown in the NFS school.***

The students in the RCI school made no reference in interviews to the school not helping them to mix with those of lower socio-economic status, although the students were aware of their privileged lifestyle. Therefore although the hypothesis generated in Chapter 4 about the RCI students showing lower tolerance towards those of lower socio-economic status is not supported, neither is it contradicted. Furthermore, compared with the other schools, fewer students in the RCI school felt that the school was preparing them well for life in a diverse society, which lends support to the hypothesis specifically directed at one identity marker, those of lower socio-economic status. Thus this hypothesis (Hypothesis B) remains and becomes the second hypothesis.

- ***Hypothesis II: The students in the RCS, ECI, MI, NFI and NFS will show similar attitudes of tolerance towards those of a different socio-economic group, and the students in the RCI school will show lower tolerance towards those of lower socio-economic status, due to the lack of contact with this group within the RCI school.***

### **Socialisation**

All the schools were perceived to be positively endorsing diversity, even if some, such as the RCI, were not seen as so effective by their students in this respect. There was certainly no indication that any particular groups, or that diversity in a general sense, were being portrayed in a negative way. With the exception of the MI school, the student perceptions coincided with those of the school itself. Hypothesis C predicted that the students in the MI school would show lower tolerance towards other ethnic groups, due to the way in which the MI school forms an in-group/out-group based on ethnic lines, something which was related to understandings of 'home' (Chapter 4.6). None of the MI students saw their school as portraying particular ethnic groups in a negative way, or as promoting other ethnicities. Therefore it is unlikely that the school was significantly influencing the students in this way and thus this hypothesis is removed.



## **Cognitive Sophistication**

In the RCI, RCS and ECI schools, and the two non-faith schools, the student questionnaire and interview responses all indicated that students felt able to express their views and opinions, with debate and discussion being part of the classroom experience. Some students did feel that the school limited their choice in respect of faith, but in all cases this was seen to be related to individual teachers rather than the whole school approach. The students in the ECI, RCI and RCS schools did feel that they were able to make choices related to their faith, and used their faith as a source of guidance rather than it being their only moral authority. The responses of the students in the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS schools did not appear to indicate that the schools were failing to develop their students' level of cognitive sophistication, with a high degree of similarity being observed between these schools.

The situation in the MI school was more complex. The MI students did not appear to see themselves as having a choice in respect of their religion, seeing it as their sole source of authority. The fact that the students made no reference to their school in their choice of faith was not significant. If there was no choice to begin with, then the role of the school in this choice becomes irrelevant. The questionnaire data indicated that the MI school was seen by its students to have a more open classroom climate than was reported by students in the other schools. The interviews did not coincide with this view however, neither did the data, which indicated that they saw many aspects of their religion as imposing obligations. Debate was rarely mentioned, and the students referred to 'being taught'. The implication from this analysis was that the MI school was not helping the students to develop critical thinking skills, and thus might not be increasing the students' level of cognitive sophistication.

The analysis of the student cognitive sophistication responses supported the analysis of the school perspective in Chapter 4, which suggested that the MI school students would show lower tolerance, and the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS school students would show similar attitudes of tolerance. However, in its provisional form, the object of tolerance was unclear, being given as those of other faiths. The MI student interview data on the development of cognitive sophistication provided

a greater insight into who, or what, the object of tolerance might be. There was little justification for other faith groups being the object of tolerance, as at no point were those of other faiths promoted as an out-group. Cognitive sophistication is about being able to cope with other views, and processing conflicting information, and thus the object of tolerance is more likely to be related to diversity of ideas, opinions and behaviours than to specific groups. The student interview responses supported the idea that it is other views and behaviour, rather than particular groups, which are problematic.

Faith in the MI school was understood by the students as incorporating a sense of obligation, and specific rules that believers should adhere to. In contrast, faith in the other schools was understood more as providing guidance. The greater emphasis on rules seen in the MI would lend support to the idea that problems were most likely to arise when the MI students' religious views were challenged or contravened. Although such challenges could come from other religious groups this would not always be the case, for example many Christians and Muslims will both reject abortion on religious grounds. Challenges may also come from those Muslims who subscribe to a different interpretation of Islam, or from wider society in general. Therefore the object of tolerance would be those whose behaviour or views contravened Islamic religious teaching, rather than being towards a particular group. This object of tolerance related closely to that found in Hypothesis E, the hypothesis relating to the religious identity, in which the object of tolerance was given as 'non-proper' Muslims and non-Muslims, where the defining feature of the 'non-proper' Muslim group was related to differences in religious practice and belief. Therefore the modified, and final version, of this hypothesis (Hypothesis D) becomes the third hypothesis:

- ***Hypothesis III: The students in the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS schools will show similar attitudes of tolerance, and the students in the MI school will show lower tolerance towards those who contravene (Islamic) religious teaching, due to the failure of the MI school to develop a higher level of cognitive sophistication in its students.***

## 6.6 Concluding Remarks to Chapters 4, 5 and 6

In this and the previous two chapters (4 and 5) data from various perspectives relating to the six research schools have been analysed, and four hypotheses generated, which relate aspects of the school to their students' predicted attitudes of tolerance. Three of these are given above. The final one, Hypothesis E, which was generated in its final form in the previous chapter, becomes the fourth hypothesis and is reiterated below:

- ***Hypothesis IV: The students in the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS schools will show similar attitudes of tolerance, and the MI school students will show lower attitudes of tolerance towards non-Muslims and 'non-proper' Muslims, due to their religious (social) identity.***

What has gradually emerged from the analysis is that although the schools themselves may be very different in many ways, nevertheless they show a high degree of similarity in respect of the four aspects of the school which might impact on the students' attitudes of tolerance. This would suggest that although there may be variation in student tolerance responses within the schools there will be little inter-school variation. Having highlighted the similarities, one school, the MI school, was shown to be different from the others in a number of tolerance aspects. This difference thus changes the balance of the thesis from its original trajectory, in which the comparison was between faith and non-faith schools, to one in which the comparison is between the MI school and the other schools.

This thesis now moves on in the next chapter (Chapter 7) to analyse the student tolerance responses in order that the hypotheses generated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 can be tested against these findings.

## **Chapter 7: Is There any Difference in Tolerance?**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The previous three chapters have focused on the schools themselves, and hypotheses have been generated which have allowed predictions to be made regarding the possible impact of the schools on their students' attitudes of tolerance. Although the data indicated that there was little variation between the schools in respect of the four aspects which the literature suggested were likely to impact on the students' attitudes of tolerance, some differences were noted. Rather than reflecting the faith/non-faith categorisation often employed when discussing the ability of faith schools to promote tolerance, in general it was individual schools, most commonly the MI school, which were shown to be different from the other schools.

At the beginning of this thesis two research questions were posed. The first asked whether there were any differences in attitudes of tolerance between students in faith schools and those in non-faith schools, and where those differences could be found. The second looked at what involvement the schools might be seen to have in this. This chapter, and the next, will return to and attempt to answer these two questions. The focus of this chapter is mainly on the first research question, in that it highlights the differences and similarities in the students' attitudes of tolerance within and between the schools.

This chapter presents the analysis of the questionnaire and student interview responses relating to the students' attitudes of tolerance, and the resultant findings. No faith/non-faith school differences emerge. Generally the student responses are similar and show the vast majority of students to be tolerant, with greater variation being found within, rather than between, schools. But the analysis does indicate a difference between the MI school student responses and those given by the students in the other schools in one particular circumstance. One other difference is found, which is not an inter-school difference, but instead relates to the extent to which students in all the schools tolerated religious groups compared with their tolerance of other groups in society.

In Chapter 8 the findings presented in this chapter will be used to test the hypotheses generated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Both research questions will be returned to, and the findings from this chapter will be discussed in more detail, with tentative conclusions being drawn.

Before beginning the discussion it should be recalled that this research has looked at individual schools and, although they have been referred to in the research by their status (independent or state) and their religious affiliation, the findings cannot be generalised to the whole population of schools of that type.

## **7.2 How do we detect tolerance?**

This research has argued (Chapter 2.2) that common to any definition of tolerance is an element of disapproval of some other belief, lifestyle or action and the acceptance that this might exist despite one's disapproval of it. As has been discussed, this research employs Walzer's conceptualisation of tolerance which considers it as being on a continuum, but has operationalised this into two modes; passive tolerance and active tolerance (Chapter 3.2). In addition there is, of course, intolerance.

**Passive Tolerance:** This is characterised by inaction and indifference, and is associated with the granting of rights. Whether or not a relevant human right is awarded to a group, and the degree of unwillingness to involve oneself with another group, are both used as indicators of this mode of tolerance.

**Active Tolerance:** This is about actively engaging with another group, and recognising and endorsing the Other and the significance that a given belief and behaviour has in the Other's life. Responses in this mode may be characterised by interest in the Other and a willingness to interact and make an emotional connection with another group.

**Intolerance:** This means holding the view that the belief, behaviour or person should not exist. Although harm might be an indicator of this mode of tolerance it would only be in extreme cases. Separation and distancing oneself from a person or behaviour would be a more common indicator of intolerance.

A final point to be made before discussing the findings is that the assumption made in this research is that some level of disapproval is inherent when

a difference is perceived to exist. This assumption underpins much tolerance research, but is rarely made explicit (Bobo and Licari, 1989). Within this analysis it is only possible to be certain that we are dealing with 'true' tolerance at particular points. Whilst acknowledging that this may affect the findings, Bobo and Licari (1989) found that the acknowledgement of disapproval only made minor differences to the level of tolerance, which suggests that any impact that this will have on the findings will be small.

This analysis will consider the data in two parts. Initially the student responses to the passive tolerance questions will be considered, followed by an exploration of the active tolerance questions.

### **7.3 Passive Tolerance**

#### **7.3.1 The Questionnaire Responses**

The analysis of the data begins by considering the questionnaire responses to the passive tolerance questions (Questionnaire Section A: Appendix A). In these questions the students were asked to consider the granting of various basic human rights to groups bearing the identity markers highlighted in the Citizenship curriculum (QCA, 2008a; QCA, 2008b). Unlike in the analysis of the interview data, this analysis does allow the identification of a school effect, although it does not enable deduction of which aspects of the school may be responsible for the effect.

Consideration was given to whether it was appropriate to aggregate the thirteen items in this section to give an overall tolerance score. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) (Field, 2009) indicated that three items should be removed, the two relating to gender (A1 and A8) and A4 which considered the right of faith groups to protest. PCA on the remaining questions indicated that they could be considered as two groups. The first contained items relating to a variety of markers of identity (Socio-economic status (SES), Ethnicity, Disability and Religion) and was therefore considered as a marker of General Tolerance (General Tolerance). The second contained the two items which referred to homosexuality and thus was seen to be an indicator of the students' tolerance of this one group (Homosexual Tolerance). A General Tolerance score and a Homosexual Tolerance score were generated, and these were generally the dependent variables used in

the analysis<sup>285</sup> (for technical details see Appendix K). In addition an Average Tolerance score was calculated for both General and Homosexual Tolerance, which was an average of the item scores in each case ranging from 1-5 (see Appendix K). On this scale a score of less than 3 indicates intolerance, and one of 3 and above indicates a tolerant response. Presenting the results in this form shows whether the students in the schools are tolerant or intolerant, as well as allowing for comparison between the schools.

### 7.3.1.a Faith School/Non-Faith School Differences

In the first stage of the analysis the schools were considered on the basis of whether they were a faith or non-faith school. Independent t-tests were carried out on the General and Homosexual Tolerance scores.

	Faith School	Non-Faith School	Significance
General Tolerance N	-0.051 261	0.062 217	Not significant
Homosexual Tolerance N	5.11 271	6.63 225	Not significant

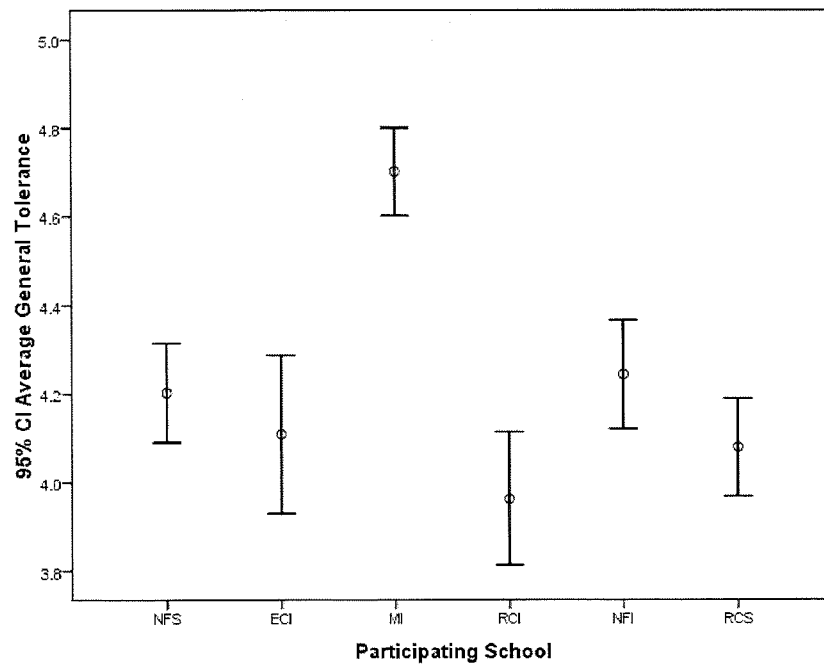
Table 7.1: Independent t-tests of the General and Homosexual Tolerance Scores.

No significant difference was found to exist between faith and non-faith school students either in respect of General Tolerance or Homosexual Tolerance.

### 7.3.1.b The Individual School Effect

Going beyond the initial dichotomous categorisation of faith and non-faith schools the data are now used to consider the individual schools, using the Average Tolerance score.

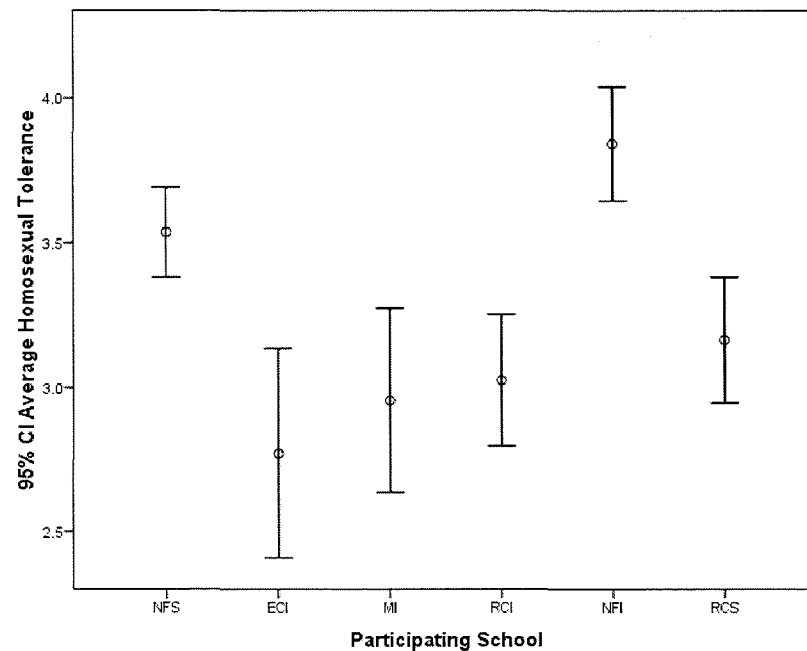
<sup>285</sup> These were the component factor scores in each case



Graph 7a: Error bar graph of Average General Tolerance showing each research school.

In the above graph (7a) if the mid-points of the schools are considered it can be seen that all the schools show an Average General Tolerance score of greater than 3, indicating that in general the students in all the schools are passively tolerant towards a wide range of groups. The lack of overlap between the bar representing the MI school student responses and those of the other schools suggests that the MI school students were significantly more passively tolerant than the students in the other schools. The overlap seen on the bars representing the other schools suggests that these schools showed no significant difference in General Tolerance.





Graph 7b: Error bar graph of Average Homosexual Tolerance scores showing each research school.

As in the case of General Tolerance, an Average Homosexual Tolerance score ranging from 1-5 was calculated. In all schools this average score was lower than the Average General Tolerance score. This is consistent with research which suggests that homosexuality is a problematic marker of identity for many groups in society (Hunt and Jensen, 2007). If passive tolerance of homosexuals is considered, a possible faith/non-faith school divide emerges. From the graph (7b) it can be seen that the students in the two non-faith schools were significantly more tolerant of homosexuals than the students in the faith schools. The average Homosexual Tolerance scores of the students in the MI and ECI schools were less than 3, indicating slight intolerance. The ECI students were the least tolerant of homosexuals, although this was not significantly different from the students in the other faith schools. This ECI school finding was in line with research conducted by Francis (2005), Sharpe (2002) and Peskin (1986) who all noted a more conservative attitude towards homosexuality among Evangelical Christian students when compared with students from other Christian denominations, although Francis's research only considered responses from males (2005). Furthermore the ECI school sample was heavily skewed, in that over 70% of the students in that year were

male<sup>286</sup>. Research has indicated that boys are less tolerant of homosexuality than girls, and, as gender is not controlled for here, this might be a factor responsible for the difference seen in this school (Sharpe, 2002).

The students participating in this research had wide variations in their background characteristics, and so far the analysis has not controlled for these characteristics, meaning that the impact of the school on this attitude of General Tolerance cannot be commented on. The data are now analysed so that these background characteristics are controlled for as far as possible.

In order to conduct this analysis to assess the impact of faith school attendance, and control for background characteristics, a multiple linear regression was run with dummy variables used for the schools. The purposeful sampling method employed in the selection of schools means that the analysis is limited to schools in the research and that the findings cannot be generalised to the whole population of faith schools (Appendix K).

Various explanatory variables were controlled for in all the analysis (Appendix C). The majority of these were individual level variables: gender; an indication of the student's ethnicity, which due to the complexity of the background of the students was crudely considered as a dichotomous variable of white or other (STUETH); whether they, or at least one of their parents, was born outside the UK (STUBIRTH and PARBIRTH); number of books in the home as a proxy for socio-economic status (books) (Janmaat, 2010); a measure of an authoritarian personality as measured by the Rokeach scale (Chapter 3.2.1 ). Dummy variables were created in order to control for the student's religious belief ((Reference: No belief), Roman Catholic, Church of England, Other Christian, Muslim, Other non-Christian). Dummy variables were also created for frequency of attendance at worship, which was seen as an indicator of religious commitment ((Reference: Never attend), Attending Major Festivals only, Attend more than once a month).

The only school level variable was the school itself (NFI, NFS, RCI, RCS, ECI or MI). Dummy variables were created for each school with the reference school being

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<sup>286</sup> The other school years were much more even.

given as the NFS school. This school was chosen as it was the median school on a wide variety of school characteristics.

The General and Homosexual Tolerance scores were regressed<sup>287</sup> with the schools and the explanatory variables given above.

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<sup>287</sup> Enter method

Standardised $\beta$ Coefficients			
VARIABLE	General Tolerance	Homosexual Tolerance	Those having different Socio-economic Status (SES)
Roman Catholic independent	-0.169	0.166	-0.128
Roman Catholic state	-0.0404	0.052	-0.098
Evangelical Christian independent	-0.144	-0.163	-0.035
Muslim independent	0.103	-0.119	0.112
Non-faith independent	0.058	0.158*	0.058
Non-faith state	REFERENCE	REFERENCE	REFERENCE
Rokeach	-0.211**	-0.173**	-0.180**
GENDER (Boy=1)	-0.075	-0.287**	-0.090
BOOKS	0.162**	0.047	0.093
STUETH (White=1)	-0.256**	0.026	-0.144
STUBIRTH (UK born=1)	0.070	0.016	0.133*
PARBIRTH (Both UK=1)	0.080	0.057	0.104
Attend Major Festivals	0.035	0.027	-0.086
Attend Regularly (at least once a month)	0.140	0.018	0.029
Roman Catholic	0.297	0.250	0.462
Other Christian (including Evangelical)	0.191	0.109	0.170
Church of England	0.112	0.146	0.187
Muslim	0.274	0.169	0.361
Other non-Christian	-0.022	0.022	-0.012
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	24.7%	20.9%	16.3%

\*\* significant at 1% level; \* significant at 5% level

Table 7.2: The multiple linear regression determinants of General, Homosexual, and SES tolerance.

The adjusted  $R^2$  scores indicate that the variables in the above analysis explain 24.7% of the difference seen in the students' General Tolerance attitude and 20.9% of the difference in their tolerance of homosexuals. These scores can be considered good, since typical scores for attitudinal questionnaires in this area can be as low as 5% (for example see Janmaat, 2008a)

The data (table 7.2) indicate that three background characteristics were highly significant (at the 1% level) in the General Tolerance attitude. The more authoritarian a student was, the lower their level of General Tolerance, a finding which is consistent with Rokeach's research (1960) (Chapter 2.3.4). The t-statistic (Appendix L) indicated that this was the most important explanatory variable. In addition white students showed less General Tolerance than non-white students, and increased levels of SES were also positively correlated with General Tolerance, meaning that the higher the SES background of the student the more generally tolerant they were. The analysis did not indicate that any of the schools impacted on this attitude, and certainly no faith/non-faith divide was indicated.

In the case of tolerance of homosexuals, again the more authoritarian a student was, the less tolerant they were of this group. This was highly significant (at the 1% level), which is again consistent with the findings of Rokeach (1960). However, the t-statistic (Appendix L) indicated that gender was the most important explanatory variable, with boys being less tolerant of homosexuals than girls, a difference which is consistent with findings from research conducted by Francis (2001) and Sharpe (2002) into teenage attitudes. The NFI school is seen to positively impact on its students' attitude towards homosexuals (significant at the 5% level). As no significant differences were seen between the faith schools and the NFS school this indicates no faith/non-faith school divide. Once background characteristics are controlled for there is no evidence that faith schools were negatively impacting on their students' tolerance of homosexuals.

Analysis of the questions relating solely to socio-economic status (SES) was conducted as Hypothesis II specifically referred to this group. Whether this hypothesis has been confirmed will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 8, but in this case no significant differences were seen between schools. Again those who showed higher levels of authoritarianism also showed lower levels of tolerance

towards those with a different SES. Those born in the UK indicated more tolerance of those with a different SES than those who were born outside the UK.

The Rokeach score has been shown to be a significant variable in the case of all three dependent variables (all significant at the 1% level). In all cases the more authoritarian a person was, the less tolerant they were. If the t-statistics are considered for each of the significant explanatory variables then the Rokeach score is the most important explanatory variable in the case of General and SES Tolerance (Appendix L). Apart from highlighting what an important predictor of tolerance this explanatory variable is, it also raised the question of whether what is being seen here is an indirect effect, with the authoritarian personality as the intermediate variable. What could have been occurring was that the school was making the students more authoritarian, which in turn made them less tolerant of a particular group, and thus there might have been a school effect. However, further analysis indicated that this was not the case. When a regression analysis was conducted with the Rokeach score used as the dependent variable, none of the schools were shown to be significant explanatory variables. Furthermore when regression analyses were conducted on General and Homosexual Tolerance, this time omitting the Rokeach score as an independent variable, once again none of the schools were shown to be significant. More details are given in Appendix L.

From the analysis of the questionnaire data there does not appear to be any evidence to support the view that students in the faith schools in this research were less tolerant than their non-faith school counterparts. Having considered the questionnaire data and found little variation, the analysis will now turn to the interview data.

### **7.3.2 Interview Responses**

Within the interviews two sets of questions were designed to explore passive tolerance. The first were conceived as being about allowing some group a freedom to act, where the justification for allowing the action was based on an acknowledgement of human rights. The other set focused on tolerance of diversity and dissent, exploring the students' reactions to those of other religions (or none),

or towards members of their own faith who contravened prohibitions which were understood to be stipulated by their religion.

### **7.3.2.a The Sikh Play and the BNP**

Both questions employed in this section were based on relatively recent real events and as such were less abstract than the questionnaire items. The first question considered the British National Party<sup>288</sup> (BNP). This group was not linked to any one of the specified identity markers, but does operate as a distinct group in the same way. The other question was about a play written by a Sikh, and set in the Sikh community, and thus related to the faith identity marker. One or occasionally both of these questions were asked of all the respondents, except in a few instances where there were time constraints.

#### **A: The BNP**

The first question asked whether Nick Griffin, the leader of the BNP and elected member of the European Parliament, should have been allowed to appear on the BBC1 Question Time programme<sup>289</sup>. This drew on a real event which had had a considerable amount of media exposure (BBC News, 2009) and thus was a relevant item to discuss with students. This question was particularly good at exploring tolerance as, unlike any other question, the majority of respondents explicitly disassociated themselves from Nick Griffin's views, usually at an early stage in the discussion<sup>290</sup>. The responses to this question could be split into three groups based on whether they felt that Nick Griffin should appear, and the reasoning or justification for that.

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<sup>288</sup> The British National Party is an extreme right-wing group who are strongly opposed to immigration and the presence of ethnic minorities in the UK, and who promote a very exclusive, white notion of 'Britishness'.

<sup>289</sup> The broadcast was made on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2009

<sup>290</sup> Noor, Suliman, Ibrahim (MI); Annabel, Christina, Jon (RCI); James, Charlotte, Michael (NFS); Ben (ECI); Laura (NFI); Hannah, Sean, Jennifer (RCS)

One line of reasoning, which constituted the largest response group, drew upon a human rights discourse of freedom of speech or, less commonly, of freedom of opinion<sup>291</sup>. The following responses were typical of this type

*'...of course the BNP is a political party so it's just like the Labour or the Tories they obviously have their right to do it [appear on Question Time]' [James NFS]*

*'Well right everybody else has the opportunity to voice their opinions and don't see why he shouldn't...' [Anna ECI]*

The use of freedom of speech reasoning generally resulted in agreement with the BBC's decision to allow Nick Griffin on to air his views. These students can be considered to be displaying passive tolerance, in that they disapproved of Nick Griffin's views, but still afforded him basic human rights. No agreement with the BBC decision was expressed on any other grounds.

Those who disagreed with Nick Griffin being allowed onto the programme either justified this decision in terms of outcomes, such as the belief that it would instigate violence<sup>292</sup>, or in terms of the offence which was likely to be given to non-white groups, which sometimes included the respondent<sup>293</sup>. Reasoning based on avoiding violence can be considered a pragmatic approach, and therefore cannot be analysed in terms of tolerance.

With one exception<sup>294</sup>, those responses which referred to offence also acknowledged that the BNP had the right to freedom of speech, but ultimately felt that the offence that would be caused to another outweighed the BNP's right to freedom of speech. As Nick Griffin was not being granted a human right this cannot be considered a tolerant response towards the BNP. The action can be interpreted as being based on emotion and a personal view of what he said, rather than what Vogt would term as 'second sober thoughts' (1997, p. 135). This is illustrated in the

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<sup>291</sup> Laura, Hugh(NFI); Hannah, Jennifer(RCS); Jon, Mark Gregory, Matt, Christina(RCI); James, Charlotte, Michael(NFS); Anna, Ben, (ECI), Noor (MI)

<sup>292</sup> Ibrahim, Suliman(MI); Ben(ECI)

<sup>293</sup> Annabel(RCI); Noor(MI); Nick(ECI)

<sup>294</sup> Nick(ECI)



extract below where Noor acknowledges that human rights could be applied, but justifies her view by recourse to her own sense of offence, which is in turn connected to her group identity as a member of an ethnic minority.

*'To be honest as a person of an ethnic minority I find him quite insulting because I believe that everybody has a right to be in this country and he does say some very racist things and they did.. the BBC did allow him on to air his views which everyone is.. has freedom of speech, but sometimes it's very offensive' [Noor MI]*

This can be compared to the previous responses above, where despite finding what Nick Griffin said abhorrent, the students still felt he should be granted the right of free speech. This emotional reasoning will be returned to when the Sikh play responses are considered.

No overall patterns could be seen within the schools, apart from the almost universal reference to free speech. None of the MI school students supported the BBC's decision to allow Nick Griffin to appear, whereas in the other schools at least two-thirds of the respondents agreed with him being allowed to appear. But the MI school students' lack of support obscures the variation in justification in each case. Only in one case was tolerance, as defined by the granting of human rights, not shown<sup>295</sup>. In the others<sup>296</sup> the justification was based on pragmatism, and hence does not allow any inference about whether tolerance was being shown.

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<sup>295</sup> Noor(MI)

<sup>296</sup> Suliman,Ibrahim(MI)

## B: The Sikh Play

The alternative question in this section asked about the performance of a play in Birmingham, again based on a real event, which occurred in 2004 (Guardian, 2004). The scenario posed to the students was:

*A few years ago a play was going to be performed in Birmingham. This fictional play was about murder and rape in a Gurdwara by a member of the Sikh community. It was written by a Sikh. The play was not performed because of violent protests from a number of Sikhs in the city who found it offensive. Do you think the group was right to act as they did?*

The first question about whether the group was right to act as they did was sometimes followed up with a discussion about whether the theatre was right to take the play off. Almost all the responses to this part of the question were pragmatic<sup>297</sup>, with the violent nature of the protests being an important factor. As a pragmatic response does not indicate whether tolerance is being shown, this aspect of the question is not discussed in detail, but occasional references are made to the non-pragmatic responses.

The main focus of the question was tolerance of another faith, and whether the students felt basic human rights should be granted primarily the right of protest, to another religious group, or in the case of the non-faith pupils towards religious groups in general. There was no evidence of the students' disapproval of this group, unlike the clear disapproval shown towards the BNP.

If tolerance of the Sikh group is considered, then in all but two of the responses<sup>298</sup> the opinion was that the group had a right to protest, or that the group were justified in protesting<sup>299</sup>. It is clear that tolerance was being shown in the responses where a right was being alluded to. I would also argue that acknowledging a group's justification in protesting would be tantamount to

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<sup>297</sup> Gregory, Matt(RCI); Esther, Laurence, Sarah, Luke(ECI); Joseph, Rhys, Danny(RCS); Pippa, Georgina, Alicia(NFI)

<sup>298</sup> Katie(NFS); Grace(RCS)

<sup>299</sup> Joseph, Danny, Rhys, Rhianna(RCS); Alicia, Pippa, Georgina(NFI); Rebecca, Esther, Sarah, Luke(ECI); Hassan(NFS); Gregory, Matt, Emily, Harriet(RCI); Yasmin, Saira, Hussain, Yousef, Noor, Zainab(MI)

allowing them to protest, and therefore both responses could be taken to indicate that tolerance was being shown.

Although no difference in respect of tolerance was discernible between the schools, with students universally appearing tolerant of another faith group, differences did become apparent when the reasoning given by the students for tolerating the protest was considered.

Two distinct approaches could be discerned, which I suggest can be related to the two models of tolerance that Vogt (1997, p. 146) refers to. These build on his conception of tolerance as being some form of brake on the impulse to act upon a negative emotion that might be felt towards a certain group or situation. The first, the Emotional Model, sees an emotional connection with an Other as providing this check

Negative Emotion → Emotional Override → Action Checked.

In the second model, the Cognitive Model, the override is related to cognitive skills such as critical reasoning.

Negative Emotion → Cognitive Override → Action Checked

Returning to the research responses, the Sikh group was believed to be right to protest because they were offended. This is an example of an Emotional Model response in that the sense of offence is an emotional response, and it was this which was seen to justify the protest<sup>300</sup>. This approach required the respondent to be able to make an emotional connection with the Sikh group, as Hussain can be seen to do here when he links the temple and the mosque,

*' Yeah I completely agree with them [the Sikh protesting group], but obviously 'cause in the Sikh, is it in a Sikh Temple?[....] Then it's a holy place. Like for me Mosque is a holy place, Christianity the Church. Obviously then if they are going to do stuff like that it's not ok for them like it's just indecent.' [Hussain MI]*

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<sup>300</sup> Yasmin, Saira, Hussain, Zainab (MI); Rhys (RCS); Sarah (ECI)

The second approach still acknowledged the Sikhs' notion of offence as the justification for the protest, but the act of protest was itself legitimated by the fact that the group was afforded the right to protest<sup>301</sup>. The invoking of human rights can be seen as a cognitive process, and thus these students were using a Cognitive Model response. This approach does not require the respondent to make any emotional connection with the Sikhs. Below, although Matt disagrees with the Sikh group that the play was offensive, this does not stop him believing they should be afforded the right to protest.

*'if it offends them people have a right to protest, but um.. if it's for a fictional play, like you said it..... it shouldn't like have much of an effect on them if it's just a play written it's not ... it's not affecting them directly' [Matt RCI]*

A possible implication of this is that human rights discourse is particularly effective in encouraging a tolerant response in situations where there is deep animosity towards a particular group.

A marked difference between the MI school and the other schools could be detected, based on the form of reasoning used. Slight variations could be seen between the responses in the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFS, NFI schools, but the majority of the responses were of the Cognitive Model form, in that the group and the cause of offence seemed of low importance, with the focus simply being on their right to protest.

In the MI school, even in the two responses where rights were referred to, the emphasis was on the emotive aspect of the situation, with some students finding it hard to conceive that such a play could be written at all, as Yasmin's response shows. Although in this extract she refers to Islam, later in her interview the sentiments were extended to the Sikh case.

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<sup>301</sup> Noor, Yousef(MI); Emily, Harriet, Matt, Gregory(RCI); Hassan(NFS); Luke, Esther, Rebecca(ECI); Georgina, Pippa, Alicia(NFI); Joseph, Danny, Rhianna(RCS)

*'...because things like that wouldn't happen in a Mosque and that's like going against religion completely so it's almost offensive to the religion [.....] because I mean the Mosque is a place of worship and things like that don't happen in places such as a Mosque so saying that it would goes against it and yeah it's just wrong.'* [Yasmin MI]

The responses either referred to the negative image of the religion which would be promulgated by such a play<sup>302</sup>, and/or, as in Yasmin's response, to a general offence towards the religion<sup>303</sup>. The negative image response could also be seen to be connected with the student's religious group identity

*'It will just portray a negative image of you and your religion, not only you because you are an ambassador for your religion so it will give a bad image of your religion too.'* [Saira MI]

The religious context seemed to be significant to the respondents, and appeared to be privileged. This is particularly evident in Saira's response below, but could also be detected in the other MI school responses.

*'...if it offends the religion I think it should be taken off. Because religion is not a joke and people live by something, people follow by something people think about with their every breath it's something serious. [.....]If the play doesn't have anything that offends the religion in its content then I don't think it should be taken away.'* [Saira MI]

The religious context was also seen to be relevant in the case of the other schools. As in Saira's response this was sometimes related to faith being something which is deeply held

*'because they have like faith in their faith if that makes sense? '* [Rhys RCS]

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<sup>302</sup> Saira, Hussain, Noor(MI)

<sup>303</sup> Yasmin, Saira, Yousef, Zainab(MI)

Despite the religious matter of the play being regarded as a factor, often an important one, for students in most of the schools it was rarely the sole factor in the discussion, with the exception of the MI school where the religious aspect was often cited as the sole justification for the response.

If the two scenarios are considered together several points emerge. The first is that with a few exceptions, in line with the quantitative data, the students were tolerant of those of other faiths. In the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFS, NFI schools the majority of student responses to both the BNP and the Sikh play questions drew upon and employed human rights, which enabled them to be tolerant even when they clearly disagreed with the group in question (which in itself is really true tolerance). In the MI school, human rights were not completely absent from the discussion, but the overriding factor was an emotional connection with the group in question. In the case of the Sikh group this was possible and tolerance was shown. The emotional model did not seem to elicit a tolerant response in cases where little or no connection could be made. The difference between the MI students and those in the other schools over human rights reflects differences noted by Verkuyten and Slooter (2008) in their research looking at adolescents' reasoning about freedom of speech. They too suggest that human rights are not rejected by Muslim students, but highlight the context as being important in determining the way that students evaluate different considerations.

### **7.3.2.b Religious Prohibition**

The final set of questions relating to passive tolerance focused on the students' responses to people who contravened a named religious prohibition. The students were asked about how they would react if their friend, who was not of their own faith, did the prohibited thing. The question was then repeated, but this time focusing on a friend of the same faith. In order that the selected religious prohibition should not be imposed on them, the students themselves were asked to name such a prohibition or, in certain cases, obligation. In a second version of the question the students' reactions to inter-faith marriage were considered. Although

a number of students were asked this question only Muslim students<sup>304</sup> indicated that they felt that there was any bar to inter-faith marriage and so only those responses are considered.

This question tackles two objects of tolerance. The question relating to the non-faith friend considers tolerance of diversity, in that the person does not share the same view as the respondent. The second is tolerance of dissent, which is tolerance towards those of one's own group who break group norms. This section begins by considering tolerance of diversity before looking at dissent, and concludes with an examination of the action taken by the students.

### **A: Tolerance of Diversity — My Non-faith Friends**

Variations were seen in the students' responses to this first question, but the differences between the schools were small. The exception to this was the MI school where a particular low tolerance response was seen among some students.

The majority of the student responses could be seen as tolerant. The students did not seek to impose their religious views on their non-faith friends<sup>305</sup>, although some would offer guidance<sup>306</sup> or were concerned about welfare or health implications<sup>307</sup>. Hannah's response is quite typical. She clearly indicates that she opposes the action, but she is willing to accept, and respect, her friend's alternative value system and her autonomy

*'...it would depend on what their religion taught because I'd want to support them in whatever their decision was so... I do .. it is kind of wrong to have an abortion and I do understand that but... I do believe that... but if their belief is something different then I can't just go up and say don't do it because it's not what they believe in' [Hannah RCS]*

With one exception<sup>308</sup> the imposition of views was only seen in the MI school, and then only in a few responses. While the respondents would not aim to

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<sup>304</sup> Saira, Hussain, Yousef (MI)

<sup>305</sup> Yasmin, Zainab, Ibrahim (MI); Hassan (NFS); Esther, Rebecca (ECI); Pippa (NFI); Hannah (RCS)

<sup>306</sup> Pippa (NFI); Hannah (RCS)

<sup>307</sup> Hassan (NFS); Ibrahim (MI)

<sup>308</sup> Grace (RCS)

stop their friends from acting in all circumstances, for example it was not expected that the friend would never drink alcohol, nevertheless they would expect them to stop when in their presence, as can be seen here in Noor's response:

*'I'd just tell them that my religion says I'm not allowed to drink and stuff so could you either put this away or would you mind putting this away' [Noor MI]*

This type of response whereby the respondent wishes to distance themselves from behaviour which contravenes what is considered acceptable within their own religion was particular to the MI school and will be discussed in more detail shortly. It clearly indicates a low passive tolerance response and, as I argue below, it actually demonstrates intolerance. The view expressed by the non-MI school exception, Grace, differed from the MI school responses in that there was no indication of her wishing to distance herself from a friend who did not comply, thus this would be seen as low passive tolerance rather than intolerance.

Although a fair degree of similarity is shown between the attitudes of all the respondents, the MI school does have the highest proportion of students who could be classed as showing low passive tolerance or even intolerance towards diversity.

## **B: Tolerance of Dissent — My Religious Friends**

Most of the responses referring to the non-faith friend indicated that the respondent would not broach the matter of the action being prohibited with their friend, so for example although the respondent would not drink she would not say to her friend that they should not drink. But when discussing their faith friends all the respondents indicated that they would in some way raise the matter of the prohibition with this friend.

Again a difference between the MI school responses and those from the other schools was seen, but in this situation the difference was more clearly delineated than it was when diversity was being considered. Interestingly Grace was again the non-MI school exception, with her response being the only one to



show any similarity to those of the MI students<sup>309</sup>. All but one of the students in the MI school<sup>310</sup> were explicit in their condemnation of dissent. Their responses were corrective and devoid of any acknowledgement of choice on the part of the faith friend. Adherence to religious teachings was something which was unambiguous and binary, as can be seen in the two quotes below.

*'Because her religion, our religion tells us not to drink I would tell her not to drink and I would give her warnings and maybe like preach to her and tell her all the things that could happen to her or take it away and throw it in the bin or something.'* [Saira MI]

*'I'd tell her you're a Christian.. you know... you know what is said and what is not said and you ..you know... you can't abort a child because you know that's just wrong'* [Grace RCS]

This authoritative, absolute nature of religious teachings could also be seen in responses to marrying outside the faith<sup>311</sup>. In Saira's response below she is discussing her reaction to her brother possibly marrying a non-Muslim, in which her reaction is grounded in what she believes is permissible in Islam.

*'No because at the end of the day he's allowed to get married to a Christian or a Jew or whatever you call it so I wouldn't have any problems with that because it's allowed in Islam.'* [Saira MI]

Restrictions over who a Muslim may marry vary between interpretations, and some interpretations do restrict Muslims, in particular females, from marrying someone who is not Muslim (Friedmann, 2003). For other Muslim respondents in the research<sup>312</sup> the prohibition on females marrying outside the faith was so strong that they struggled to even engage with the question.

I would suggest that these students were showing a low degree of passive tolerance, bordering on intolerance, as they were not willing to accept the person

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<sup>309</sup> Grace(RCS)

<sup>310</sup> Suliman,Yasmin,Saira,Noor,Ibrahim(MI) the exception being Zainab

<sup>311</sup> Saira,Hussain,Yousef(MI)

<sup>312</sup> Hussain,Yousef(MI)

holding a particular view or acting in that way at all.

The responses from the students in the other schools<sup>313</sup> showed greater variation, but some patterns can be found amongst them. The respondents here were again likely to approach their friend, but this time there was a recognition that there might be more factors to consider than solely whether the behaviour was permitted<sup>314</sup>. Students were aware, and prepared to accept, that the friend's degree of religious commitment might be different from their own, as can be seen in the responses below

*'Then that naturally I'd feel the responsibility to tell him that you.. this is against the teachings of your faith. Well then I'd ask them first of all I'd .... I'd look at them and ask them and see how much they were a Muslim themselves. If they were praying alongside us and reading the Qur'an then I'd know ..... like him partying or drinking etc. etc. then I'd tell them well why are you doing this?' [Hassan NFS]*

*'I'd probably would talk to them because they're not being true to their own faith or if they declared that they're a Christian I wouldn't be that really patronising judgemental but just say to them you know you said one thing and I mean their views might have changed on the whole faith thing' [Esther ECI]*

The second factor was the acceptance and recognition that the faith friend was an individual who could exercise choice<sup>315</sup>. This concept of choice also led to the respondents talking more about helping the friend to reach their decision and supporting the person, rather than correcting them. This element of choice can be seen in Hannah's response

*'it's not my place to try and change what they want to be. If they want to have an abortion I'd probably say think about it first .. think about it make sure you have everything in your head that you say it's the best idea not to have it and adopt it or have it and keep it or whatever.'*  
*[Hannah RCS]*

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<sup>313</sup> Hassan(NFS); Pippa(NFI);Rebecca,Esther(ECI);Grace,Hannah(RCS)

<sup>314</sup> Pippa(NFI);Zainab(MI);Hannah(RCS);Esther(ECI);Hassan(NFS)

<sup>315</sup> Zainab(MI);Hannah(RCS);Rebecca,Esther(ECI);Hassan(NFS)

Similarly here in this extract from Zainab's interview (the atypical MI student) the faith friend's choice is acknowledged, and advice, rather than an order, is given,

*'I would ask her like what made you change from being this to this, as in like how come you've taken off your scarf? I'd be upset, but I wouldn't tell her I'd be upset because ... it's her own choice, it's her decision. She's taking off her scarf I can't do anything about it. Maybe I could influence her or advise her, but I wouldn't force her like 'Oh my God why are you taking off your scarf put it back on!' I wouldn't say that. I'd just be like 'how come you've taken off your scarf?' and her reasons, maybe I'd look at her reasons ... say ok' [Zainab MI]*

The willingness of the respondent to acknowledge choice and to support the person despite disagreeing with their choice indicated that passive tolerance was certainly being shown, and many of the responses were in fact displaying tolerance in the active mode. This was very different from the majority of the MI school responses which were low passive tolerance or intolerant responses.

### **C: The Effect on the Friendship**

In the above analysis the MI school students generally showed themselves to have low tolerance (bordering on intolerance) of dissent. The MI school responses were very different from those found in the other five schools. This difference was less marked, but still evident, when tolerance of diversity was considered. If the respondent's reaction towards the friend is considered, then a significant difference can be seen between the MI school students' responses and those in other schools.

In the RCS, NFI, NFS and ECI schools if a friend, whether the same faith or not, did not follow the advice or the perceived 'right' course the friendship remained intact, as can be seen here where Esther talks first about her non-faith friend saying

*'I'd still treat them as the same person.'* [Esther ECI]

and then about the responsibility she feels towards her faith friend. Her intervention is justified, but there is no indication that she would reject her friendship

*'because they're my friend I don't want them to get hurt it's not so much that I'm judging them because they're having sex outside marriage. It's yeah they're my friends and if anything happened to them I'd feel partly responsible if I didn't you know say what I thought. ' [Esther ECI]*

In the MI school, non-compliance with the religious teaching could involve the removal of friendship and disassociation from the person. This happened with both faith<sup>316</sup> and non-faith friends<sup>317</sup>, but was more common, almost universal, in the former. Yasmin differentiates between her action towards her non-Muslim friend, in the first quote, and her Muslim friend in the second

*'It would not affect me as such because it's them[non-Muslim friend] doing it and not me [...] it [eating pork]wouldn't be the right thing to do and I would have that in my mind but I wouldn't say anything I wouldn't do anything about it' [Yasmin MI]*

*'not that I would say anything to them [Muslim friend] but I wouldn't be friends with them for any longer' [Yasmin MI]*

Whereas Suliman makes no difference between his friends

*'I wouldn't even deal with a person that drinks. I'd try to stay away from someone that drinks.' [Suliman MI]*

Saira's reaction to a sibling marrying a non-Muslim illustrates the strength of her feeling at non-compliance:

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<sup>316</sup> Saira, Hussain, Yousef, Suliman, Yasmin, Noor (MI)

<sup>317</sup> Suliman, Saira, Noor (MI)

*'I'd probably disown them' [Saira MI]*

Reactions around accepting other modes of behaviour can be seen to be connected with image, both the student's own and by extension that of the group (see Chapter 4.6.4). You are seen as a reflection of those you associate with, guilt by association as it were, and thus mixing with people whose behaviour contravenes Islamic teaching compromises you, as Saira explains:

*'I wouldn't hang out with people who drink in the first place because your friends show who you are.'* [Saira MI]

With a few students<sup>318</sup> a second related response was seen which was connected to, but slightly different from, the removal of friendship, in that it could be directed to a wider section of the population. Within this response was the desire, or even expectation, that someone around them should refrain from the prohibited behaviour. This is illustrated in the two quotes below which can be contrasted with Yasmin's response above, where she accepted that her friend was not bound by the same rules as her and therefore she could eat pork.

*'I'd just tell them that my religion says I'm not allowed to drink and stuff so could you either put this away or would you mind putting this away or.. I'd have to go.'* (Noor MI)

*'like somebody who comes on a bus with a bottle of wine and he's about to open it and I say to him wait don't open it. I can have that view that I don't want him to drink in front of me .. I don't want him to get intoxicated in front of me...' [Suliman MI]*

I see this type of response as being linked to two previous observations. The first is the importance of the religious aspect of the prohibition which, as was suggested in the Sikh play question, seemed to be held in a privileged position and

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<sup>318</sup> Suliman, Noor(MI)

thus became the influential consideration. The second, which can be related to observations on the BNP question, was the way that religious teaching took precedence over the recognition of human rights.

The closest response to the above found in any of the other schools was that of Hassan (a Muslim student in the NFS school). Removal for him was an option, but in extreme circumstances only. In addition, unlike the responses in the MI school, adherence to religious teaching was not seen in a binary way and he was willing to consider degrees of behaviour.

*'I would still be friends with them but there's a certain extent if they... I dunno... started completely going against the things the teachings of Islam [...] obviously being excessively violent or being very vulgar in the use of their language. I think that's naturally where my morals and ethics you know I wouldn't seek friendship with this. However if they were within a certain degree for example they drank alcohol' [Hassan NFS]*

The MI students' responses, showing removal of friendship and the desire to be distanced from the contravening action or behaviour, indicate that the attitude being displayed here is intolerance rather than very low passive tolerance, in that the intention is that the action or behaviour should not exist or that its existence should be denied or hidden. This is in marked contrast to the responses from the students in the RCS, NFS, NFI and ECI schools where, with few exceptions, the responses showed the students to be tolerant of both diversity and dissent.

### **7.3.3 Passive Tolerance Summary**

The analysis of the passive tolerance questions has shown that there was no difference between the attitudes of passive tolerance shown by the students in the faith schools compared with those in the non-faith schools. However, inter-school differences were seen. The NFI students were found to be more tolerant of homosexuals, and the MI school students showed less tolerance towards those people whose behaviour went against Islamic beliefs and teachings. Differences in the reasoning behind attitudes were also seen, with human rights discourse being

used less often in the MI school. What was noticeable in the responses from the MI school was the way in which consideration of the complexities of a situation was often absent. In the other schools the responses showed a greater tendency to consider some alternative factors. Finally, in the MI school in situations in which there were competing rights, religious factors took precedence over non-religious ones. Active tolerance will now be considered.

## 7.4 Active Tolerance

This mode of tolerance was also explored in the student questionnaires and interviews. The main object of tolerance was the Religious Other, but other groups were also included and these will be seen to provide an interesting comparison.

### 7.4.1 The Questionnaire Responses — Tolerance of Religious Groups

This section dealt solely with different religious groups and religious tolerance. Principal Component Analysis conducted on the nine items indicated that two of the questions, B1.3 and B1.6<sup>319</sup>, were problematic, and therefore these were removed from the analysis. The remaining seven items were then seen to indicate general Religious Tolerance, and an Average Religious Tolerance score was generated (for technical details see Appendix K).

	Faith School	Non-Faith School	Significance
Religious Tolerance N	0.0023 258	-0.0029 206	Not significant

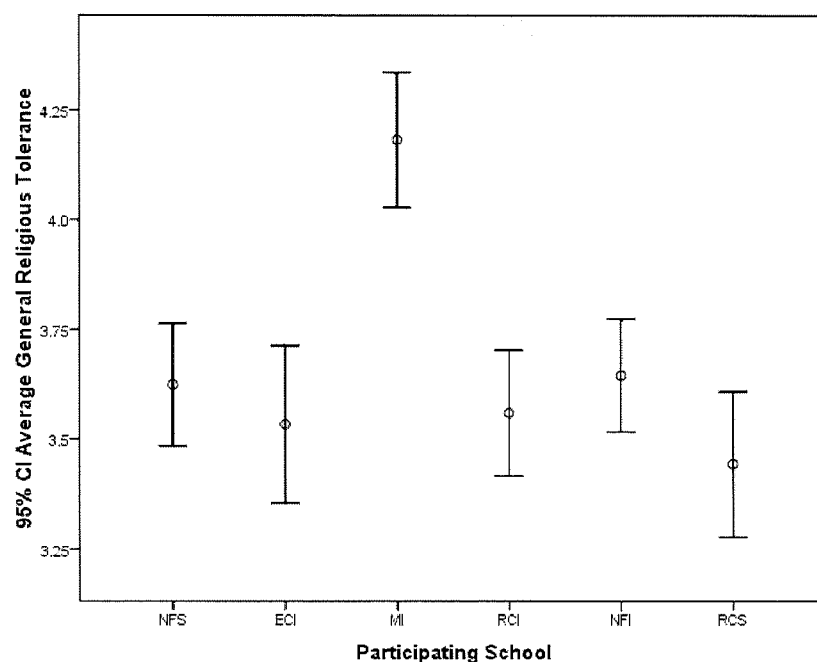
Table 7.3: Independent t-tests Religious Tolerance score.

Independent t-tests conducted on the Religious Tolerance score indicated that when active tolerance was considered no difference between the faith and non-faith schools in their tolerance of other religious groups was shown.

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<sup>319</sup> Removed questions were B1.3: Pupils should not be allowed time off school to attend their religious festivals and B1.6: In mainly non-Christian areas it is offensive to display Christmas decorations.

Average Religious Tolerance scores were calculated on a scale of 1-5, as they were for Average General Tolerance (Section 7.3.1). The mid-points (average scores) in all the schools were above 3 indicating a high level of tolerance (graph 7c). But a comparison of the individual schools indicates that students in the MI school were significantly more religiously tolerant than in any of the other schools<sup>320</sup>. Differences could be seen between the other schools, with the students in the RCS school appearing as the least tolerant, but none of these were significant.



Graph 7c: Error bar graph of Average Religious Tolerance scores showing each research school.

The Religious Tolerance score was then regressed against schools, with various explanatory variables (Section 7.3.1) being controlled for.

<sup>320</sup> This is indicated by the fact that the confidence interval bars around the mean point do not overlap with any of the other schools.



VARIABLE	Religious Tolerance (Standardized $\beta$ Coefficients)
Roman Catholic independent	-0.024
Roman Catholic state	-0.038
Evangelical Christian independent	0.011
Muslim independent	-0.035
Non-faith independent	0.110
Non-faith state	REFERENCE
Rokeach	-0.050
GENDER (Boy=1)	-0.175**
BOOKS	-0.040
STUETH (White=1)	-0.238**
STUBIRTH (UK born=1)	0.048
PARBIRTH (Both UK=1)	0.031
Attend major festivals only	-0.086
Attend place of worship regularly (at least once a month)	0.215*
Roman Catholic	0.072
Other Christian (including Evangelical)	-0.045
Church of England	-0.028
Muslim	0.192
Other non-Christian	-0.054
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	20.6%

\*\* significant at 1% level; \* significant at 5% level;

Table 7.4: The multiple linear regression determinants of Religious Tolerance.

Once the explanatory variables were controlled for, the differences between schools became non-significant (table 7.4). This indicates that even when active tolerance was considered there was no significant difference in tolerance between the faith and non-faith school students. The adjusted  $R^2$  score indicated that about one-fifth of the differences in Religious Tolerance have been explained by the variables above. Again a good amount of the variance can be seen to have been explained. The analysis did show that boys were less religiously tolerant than girls, and that white students were less tolerant than those of other ethnicities, with both of these differences being highly significant at the 1% level.

Those who worshipped regularly, an indicator of religious commitment, were also found to show higher levels of religious tolerance than those who never attended (significant at the 5% level). Although not significant, those who attended worship occasionally showed lower tolerance than those who never attended. This pattern is consistent with findings from research conducted by Allport (1967) amongst others. The relationship between the regularity of attendance at worship and tolerance of a variety of objects of tolerance is described as curvilinear, with those who infrequently attend being less tolerant than both those who regularly attend and those who never attend. Briefly, the difference is seen to relate to whether the belief is held intrinsically (regular attenders) or extrinsically (irregular attenders). Regular attenders are seen to internalise their belief and live more in accordance with the teachings of the faith, such as being tolerant and showing respect to others, whereas the irregular attenders are more utilitarian about their belief, and thus the belief guides their actions to a lesser extent (ibid).

#### **7.4.2 The interviews**

##### **7.4.2.a Teaching About Other Faiths**

The first question which explored active tolerance asked the students about whether their school should teach about other faiths (Appendix B). This explored the extent to which the students expressed an interest in the Religious Other or saw a value in another faith. Apart from one response<sup>321</sup> all the students felt that

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<sup>321</sup> Suliman(MI)

their school should teach about other faiths. This finding contradicts research conducted by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion which found that the majority of white students 'saw little reason to study or respect other (non Christian) faiths' (Billings and Holden, 2010, p. 9). This study by Billings and Holden had also considered Year 10 students, and thus the difference cannot be explained in terms of a difference in maturity. The difference may reflect contextual differences as the Commission's study focused on multicultural towns in the north of England, where there had been a recent history of inter-ethnic violence and ongoing issues over employment, a situation noticeably different from the London-based focus of this study.

The one student<sup>322</sup> who rejected the teaching of other faiths was not against it himself, but was concerned about the anticipated reaction of some of his class and how his teacher would cope, as he explains

*'If this school started teaching all faiths then some people might start mocking other faiths and I think that'd be very dangerous like other people saying bad views about other faiths 'cause people might be like 'oh Islam is the only religion' Islam is the only right religion and some students might be like getting carried away, and then if the teacher was to teach another religion, and then they mocked it then the teacher wouldn't know how to deal with it, and then that's why I think it's good to teach one faith ' [Suliman MI]*

A number of the students saw a value in having a firm grounding in their own faith, but this did not signify a lack of interest in learning about others<sup>323</sup>. The importance and support for learning about other faiths was justified in a number of ways. Knowing about another religion was seen to foster respect for that religion<sup>324</sup>

*'You should probably know about all of them so that when you meet people of other faiths you can like respect their religion.. not do anything they wouldn't be happy with' [Ben ECI]*

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<sup>322</sup> Suliman(MI)

<sup>323</sup> Hussain(MI);Jon(RCI);Esther(ECI);Rhianna(RCS)

<sup>324</sup> Yasmin,Saira,Hussain,Zainab(MI);Pippa(NFS);Ben,Rebecca(ECI)

Respect was a particularly important motivation in the MI school<sup>325</sup> where it was linked to a religious obligation

*'Islam teaches us to respect other religions [.....] so we greatly respect other religions' [Zainab MI]*

Importance was also placed on a wider knowledge and understanding about faiths more generally, and Luke's response is typical of the sentiments expressed.

*'I think it's good to learn about other faiths [....] It just gives you a broader understanding of the world' [Luke ECI]*

Sometimes, as Katie's interview suggests, increased knowledge was seen as prudential, given the multicultural nature of society.

*'I think we should learn about all of them. Only because we live in a multicultural society. You know if we know about other people's faiths then I think it's kind of respecting them in a way. Because if it's kind of hidden we're not knowing about the people we mix with in everyday life so if I'm sitting next to someone and I don't know, I know their religion, but I don't know not their practices but their general knowledge then I can't kind of like not I don't have to talk to them but it helps to talk to them about it and it's just kind of like knowing who you're mixing with at school on an everyday basis, daily basis.' [Katie NFS]*

Supporting the teaching about other faiths was not always connected to a positive tolerance outcome. Two students in the ECI school supported the teaching of other beliefs, but one saw knowing about other faiths as a protection from erroneous beliefs<sup>326</sup>,

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<sup>325</sup> Yasmin, Saira, Hussain, Zainab (MI)

<sup>326</sup> Sarah (ECI)

*'So that we understand where they're coming from and when they bring out information about their religion we already know it so we're not overwhelmed with them and get convinced to their side' [Sarah ECI]*

and the other saw it as preparing her better to evangelise<sup>327</sup>:

*'I think you should be taught about all faiths, because if we didn't get taught about them in this school I don't think I would be able to go out and like speak about Christianity to somebody with another religion, because I don't know enough about their religion to say I think you're wrong about this.'* [Anna ECI]

Most of the support for teaching about other faiths was justified by a pragmatic response. Very few responses made reference to finding value in other faiths or being interested in the faiths themselves<sup>328</sup>, a response which would be associated with active tolerance. Whereas passive tolerance towards other faiths was almost universal, the incidence of active tolerance being shown towards this group was much lower. No school pattern could be detected in the responses.

The findings in respect of active tolerance towards other faiths, which were gained from considering the student responses to teaching about other faiths, are consistent with the questionnaire findings, in that there appears to be no difference between faith and non-faith school students. The findings also indicated that active tolerance towards other faiths was less prevalent than passive tolerance within all the schools.

#### **7.4.2.b Faith Groups**

Active tolerance towards other faiths was also explored through two other questions. The first asked about celebrating the festivals of other faiths. Students were asked to comment upon two approaches taken by different cities in the UK. These were the 'Winterval' approach taken by Birmingham City Council in 1997 and

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<sup>327</sup> Anna(ECI)

<sup>328</sup> Harriet(RCI);Laura(NFI);Yasmin,Hussain(MI)

1998 (BBC News, 1998), in which individual faiths' festivals were viewed by some to have been subsumed into one festival, 'Winterval'<sup>329</sup>, and the approach advocated by the Mayor of London in which various faith and ethnic groups have a publicly sponsored celebration marking their festival in Trafalgar Square on a weekend close to the official celebration (Appendix B). Occasionally, when interview time was limited, a shorter version of this question was used. This asked whether the students thought it offensive for other faiths' festivals to be celebrated<sup>330</sup> (Appendix B).

The alternative question considered the students' response to the building, or the closure, of another faith group's place of worship<sup>331</sup>. The question defined a faith group, different from the respondent's own, and often related to local circumstances. In style this question was very similar to the question on immigrants and those on the margins of society, discussed in the next section. This allowed, in some instances, for direct comparison of responses as, where time permitted, the question on faith was followed by the question relating to the non-religious identity marker.

Unlike the responses to the passive tolerance questions where this mode of tolerance was shown in the majority of cases, the demonstration of active tolerance was much less prevalent within all the schools, a finding consistent with those looking at teaching about other faiths in the previous section. The data showed considerable variation within all the schools<sup>332</sup>, although there was only one response which could be considered intolerant<sup>333</sup>. Whilst some differences could be detected between schools in respect of the proportion of students giving an actively tolerant response<sup>334</sup>, the responses themselves were similar. Table 7.5 below gives the percentage of active tolerance interview responses for each school.

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<sup>329</sup> This is similar to the American use of 'Holiday' to include Christmas, Hanukah etc.

<sup>330</sup> Suliman, Saira, Ibrahim (MI)

<sup>331</sup> The question asked, 'In your local area the local [name faith group] community wish to build a new [place of worship] (or indicated that the place of worship would have to close). How would you respond to that proposal?'

<sup>332</sup> NFS did not provide any responses to this question. This was partly a result of problems with time, but also the one respondent (Michael) who did answer these questions provided answers which could not be evaluated in terms of tolerance.

<sup>333</sup> Rebecca (ECI)

<sup>334</sup> Emily, Harriet (RCI); Noor, Zainab (MI); Esther, Nick (ECI); Anthony, Georgina (NFI); Joseph, Grace, Hannah (RCS)

The small sample size means that a comparison of the absolute percentages is inappropriate. However, what these results do indicate is that two groups can be distinguished; the first containing the RCI, RCS and NFI schools, and the second containing the ECI and MI schools.

School	% Active tolerance responses
RCI	50
RCS	38
ECI	18
MI	18
NFI	40

Table 7.5: Percentage of active tolerance interview responses towards those of another faith.

A minority<sup>335336</sup> of the active tolerance responses made reference to being interested and seeing value in another faith. In her response below Harriet describes her own experience of attending her friend's Bat Mitzvah<sup>337</sup> and the interest that this generated. It also shows how this contact began to help her see a significance in the practice of a Religious Other through comparison with her own religious practice.

*'I found it really interesting to see like stuff differently. [.....] so I just found it really interesting. Because actually the way ..... the way the service like went not similar, but it was like they did their equivalent of the Bible, the Torah, like they hold it up and walk around with it like we do and I just found it really interesting to see the difference.'* [Harriet RCI]

The importance of contact for initiating an appreciation of the value of other faiths was also seen in Yasmin's (MI) and Laura's (NFI) interviews.

<sup>335</sup> Joseph(RCS);Harriet,Emily(RCI)

<sup>336</sup> Although both the RCI responses used this reasoning, these two students were in the same paired interview, and therefore a note of caution must be raised before drawing the conclusion that this school somehow encouraged this response.

<sup>337</sup> Female equivalent of the Bar Mitzvah, the Jewish rite of passage to adulthood.

Responses were more likely to involve a degree of emotional connection<sup>338</sup> with the Other, but connection alone did not appear to be sufficient to initiate the action necessary for it to be considered an active tolerance response. This can be seen in Esther's response, where she goes beyond human rights, making some connection, and yet this does not motivate her to act.

*'I think everyone has their right to show their religion. Go to somewhere where they can worship... I probably wouldn't do anything about it' [Esther ECI]*

Instead what seemed to be necessary to invoke the active tolerance was some understanding or appreciation of the significance that this 'thing' had to the faith group. The students who referred to any significance often did so without any reference to their own group<sup>339</sup>. The appreciation of significance as a motivation for action can be seen in both Zainab's and particularly Anthony's responses.

*'...if they did go on a protest I'd join them because it's their holy place and no one has a right to do that sort of thing.' [Zainab MI]*

*'I would be probably more against [closing the temple] than the closing of the immigration [centre] in a way because I know, I know that the church or any religious temple as such for any religion means a lot to them, a lot a lot as in more important than probably their house or something in a way if it's quite strong or something... I'm not Hindu, but I think, I know the effect that that would have on some people. So I'd object very strongly to that.' [Anthony NFI]*

Although this section was designed to focus on active tolerance responses it also indicated differences in passive tolerance. Two elements dominated the passive responses. The first was recourse to either fairness or rights which was again a frequently used form of reasoning, for example<sup>340</sup>:

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<sup>338</sup> Noor, Zainab(MI); Esther, Nick(ECI); Anthony, Georgina(NFI); Jospeh, Grace, Hannah(RCS)

<sup>339</sup> Joseph(RCS); Zainab(MI); Nick, Esther(ECI); Anthony(NFI)

<sup>340</sup> Suliman, Saira, Yousef(MI); Joseph, Rhianna(RCS); Emily(RCI); Luke, Sarah(ECI)



*'everyone one should have the right to celebrate their own religious thing' [Sarah ECI]*

*'Then they [the religious community] have a right to protest and get people involved' [Sean RCS]*

This in itself is interesting because none of the respondents who referred to human rights discourse subsequently went on to deliver an active tolerance response. It was as if the application of human rights was a sufficient and adequate response, which could almost be seen as holding back the need for anything else.

The second element seen within the responses was a degree of disengagement and separateness, as can be seen in Saira's response:

*'It doesn't really bother me because it's their religion, their faith they get to do what they want and they have to do it' [Saira MI]*

This was most noticeable in the 'place of worship' question in which the reason for this disengagement becomes clearer. The students appeared to be seeing the other faith group as a separate, distinct, bounded community. The result of this conceptualisation was distance, sometimes resulting in a denial and dismissal of any responsibility towards this group, as can be seen in the responses of Hugh and Luke.

*'Well I don't think I'd sign it because I think if that's their business you shouldn't.... I'm sure if a Christian ...they probably wouldn't support a Christian church because they're not Christian, it's not really their place, I'm not a Hindu it's not my place to be.. I'm not any part of their community. I shouldn't be supporting something I'm not part of.'*  
*[Hugh NFI]*

*'I would be fairly indifferent really [...] They don't bother me and I've never bothered them' [Luke ECI]*

In some responses this distance, indicated by a reluctance to engage, was partially related to unfamiliarity<sup>341</sup>. In the following extract I had just asked Sean about whether he would involve himself with the group's campaign to keep their building. Sean's reluctance is related not to outright disengagement with the group, but to unfamiliarity with it.

*'I don't really know that many Muslims like [.....] If you know something you're more willing to get involved with it. If you've got no clue about the people and the community whatever then I'd be [reluctant]'* [Sean RCS]

This type of response was seen in all the schools, but in the ECI and MI schools there was a higher prevalence of the students seeing the communities as being separate, and of the students lacking any sense of there being an obligation to interact, as indicated by a reluctance to even sign a petition<sup>342</sup>.

*'I wouldn't react 'cause it's ...I don't know ...but it's got nothing what to do with me. I wouldn't get myself involved'* [Ibrahim MI]

Ben too says he would do nothing, in this case to help the local Muslim community, adding

*'it wouldn't have anything to do with me. It's their case I don't really care.'* [Ben ECI]

Although not indicative of all the responses in the schools, in both these schools the students made direct comparisons to their own religious groups<sup>343</sup>, in one case referring to them as 'rivals'. No such comparison was made in the other schools.

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<sup>341</sup> Sean(RCS)

<sup>342</sup> Yasmin, Yousef, Ibrahim(MI); Luke, Ben, Laurence, Anna(ECI)

<sup>343</sup> Laurence, Rebecca(ECI); Yasmin(MI)

*'Laurence At the moment it doesn't really bother me. You know it's kind of like rivals so..*

*HE At the moment you said it doesn't bother you, bother you in what sort of way?*

*Laurence If they were moved I wouldn't really like think that that was unjust' [Laurence ECI]'*

*'I wouldn't go against it but I wouldn't go for it because obviously in Islam Muslims think that it's the right religion so Sikhs can do what they want for themselves ' [Yasmin MI]*

What can be seen here, in both the MI and ECI schools, is a greater use by the students of their religious identity in preference to their individual identity. This use of the religious identity appeared to be negatively affecting the students' ability to interact with other religious groups. This contrasted with the other schools where the use of a religious group identity was not seen, and where there was a higher prevalence of active tolerance responses.

The analysis has indicated that in all the schools fewer students showed active tolerance towards those of other faiths than was the case with passive tolerance. This was particularly the case in the MI and ECI schools. The following section will consider non-religious groups. Thus it will become possible to make some judgements regarding whether it is the group, the degree of the response, or some interaction, which is leading to this reduced level of active tolerance responses.

#### **7.4.2.c Immigrants and Those on the Margins of Society**

In addition to the students being asked about their response to other faith groups, a question was asked about a non-religious group, either immigrants or those on the margins of society (which included recovering drug addicts, youth ex-offenders and gypsy or traveller children). Again the intention was to ask about groups which could be considered different from the respondent, and therefore questions naming 'immigrants' as a group were not asked to the MI students, as all these students were first or second generation immigrants. The 'immigrants'

question was similar to the 'place of worship' question in that it asked the students to say how they would respond to either the closing or opening of an immigrant support and advice centre. Similarly the alternative question, focusing on those on the margins of society, related to the opening of an outward bound centre which would specifically cater for this group and which would be situated close to the respondent's home (Appendix B).

Some explanation needs to be given in respect of those on the margins of society. In this situation it is not assumed that in the case of recovering drug addicts and youth ex-offenders that their former behaviour would be approved of<sup>344</sup>. This is not about tolerating their behaviour, instead the focus is on willingness to actively engage with a group whose behaviour, or former behaviour, is disapproved of.

As was seen in the responses to faith groups in the last section, if active tolerance of immigrants and marginal groups is considered, two clusters of schools can be seen (table 7.6). The first group, containing the majority of active tolerance interview responses, included the RCS, NFI and NFS schools. The second contained the ECI and MI schools. Again the MI and the ECI schools showed the lowest prevalence of active tolerance among the schools in the research.

School	% Active Tolerance Responses
RCS	86
ECI	29
MI	29
NFI	60
NFS	60

Table 7.6: Percentage of active tolerance interview responses towards immigrants and those on the margins of society.

The students' active mode responses showed little interest in the tolerated group, with only one student mentioning learning about another culture<sup>345</sup>. Instead, in the majority of responses<sup>346</sup>, the action was based on the respondent showing an

<sup>344</sup> Gypsy and traveller children have been included here as they are a group who experience considerable prejudice on account of perceptions about their lifestyle.

<sup>345</sup> Rhys(RCS)

<sup>346</sup> Yasmin,Noor(MI);Danny,Jennifer,Hannah,Joseph,Rhianna(RCS);Esther,Nick(ECI); James,Katie,Michael(NFS);Laura,Anthony,Pippa(NFI)

emotional connection with the groups concerned. This often emerged from an understanding of the benefit that these centres could provide to the groups and people concerned. Here, unlike in the faith question, an emotional connection alone was sufficient to motivate action.

*'Because there are lots of immigrants who come to this country who need to find people who like want to be in a community and find people like them maybe. And I think it would be just a good thing.'* [Pippa NFI (immigrants)]

*'I'd think that that like could probably work in a productive way. Like even it should be open to all people like people like it's a way for them to interact with people and make new friends like it's a good thing and say if like someone who has just come out of prison like had like that sort of team building like that could like help him during life to like rebuild their lives and that and get on the right track again.'* [Danny RCS (margins)]

The RCS school showed a very high proportion of active tolerance responses, which generally demonstrated a clear understanding of the situation of the Other. This school is situated in an area with high crime rates, and it might be assumed that living in such an area would make one more wary and less tolerant, particularly of those with criminal backgrounds. Instead it seemed to have given the students a better understanding, which in turn motivated them to want to assist rather than condemn and reject. As the extract below demonstrates, this desire to help is motivated by understanding the Other.

*'I'd love to take part in that and like go out and try to give leaflets to the um... kind of kids on the streets and stuff and invite them and stuff and talk to them in a way that they would be like oh yeah this place is my kind of place and stuff. Just relate to them and make them feel welcome and that they can come here every time yeah'* [Grace RCS (margins)]

In this, as in the faith group questions, inaction (a passive tolerance response) was sometimes associated with reticence, due to unfamiliarity with a group, or because of lack of appropriate skills or time<sup>347</sup>. A number of responses vaguely referred to helping as being a positive thing to do, but the respondents did not elaborate further and gave no indication of any willingness for interaction<sup>348</sup>. In consequence this type of response was still classed as passive.

In common with the faith group responses, passive tolerance was sometimes expressed in terms of disengagement and separation from the Other<sup>349</sup> as can be seen in the responses below.

*'Because I don't think that's my place really. I'm not an immigrant. I've never had any experience of immigration. ' [Hugh NFI (immigrant)]*

*'It wouldn't really have anything to do with me so I wouldn't really care' [Ben ECI (immigrants)]*

This response was much less commonly encountered than when faith groups were considered. This possibly suggests a difference in the way that the students viewed the religious and non-religious groups. Nonetheless it remained a common response in the ECI school, although with some differences. In the ECI school, when this response was used in the faith group question several of the responses involved a comparison with their own religious group — an indication that the students were using their religious identity. However, in the non-religious case, all the ECI school responses operated at the personal level, as can be seen in Ben's response above.

The other consideration which elicited a passive tolerance response was the effect on the community<sup>350</sup>. This response, with one exception<sup>351</sup>, was only found in the MI school where reference to the community featured in the majority of passive tolerance responses.

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<sup>347</sup> Nick, Esther (ECI); Michael (NFS), Suliman (MI)

<sup>348</sup> Georgina (NFI); Anna (ECI); Yousef (MI); Sean (RCS)

<sup>349</sup> Sarah, Rebecca, Laurence, Ben (ECI); Hugh (NFI)

<sup>350</sup> Suliman, Saira, Hussain, Ibrahim (MI); Louisa (NFS)

<sup>351</sup> Louisa (NFS)

*'First of all there's a community there and if you are going to put that kind of people it's just going to cut up the community more... so it's not actually beneficial for the community. It could increase crime and everything' [Hussain MI (margins)]*

*'That's a difficult one um... I would welcome um... like the traveller children and it's just..... oh.... ex-offenders they can do it again [HE right] and it's in my local area. And also it depends on what they did in the first place. If it was really horrific then obviously I don't want .... I couldn't stand to be near whoever did that like' [Louisa NFS (margins)]*

The three responses where the outward bound centre was considered in a negative light all made reference to the community. Whilst Louisa's response (above) shows her weighing and considering relative effects, in the two MI school responses the effect on the community was the sole consideration. In the extract below Saira feels strongly about the effect on the community and its image, so strongly that later in the interview she says that if it were built she would move house.

*'I wouldn't allow it. I wouldn't want personally I wouldn't want ex-criminals and people who aren't .. I'm not saying they're not good people but people who have made mistakes to be near me because they could influence the community into being violent. Maybe ruin the whole image of the community, the whole collectiveness. '[Saira MI (margins)]*

It is interesting that in this question, which has a non-religious focus, the MI students still made reference to a group identity, rather than answering from a personal perspective. The 'community' was ill-defined in the responses, although the most likely candidates were the religious community or the wider local community.

The active tolerance interview responses towards immigrants and those on the margins of society were lowest in the MI and ECI schools, as in the faith group question responses. Whether this difference was related to the students

themselves, or whether there was a school impact will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Differences could be detected between the students' attitudes of tolerance towards the two groups, with a greater proportion of the students showing active tolerance towards immigrants and those on the margins of society than towards faith groups (table 7.7 below). This situation was consistent across the schools, not just in the faith schools, which suggests that faith is less tolerated, not only by students in faith schools, but by all students.

	Overall % of Active Tolerance Responses
Faith Group	28%
Immigrants/Margins	52%

Table 7.7: Overall percentage of active tolerance interview responses towards faith groups compared with responses towards immigrants and those on the margins of society.

#### **7.4.3 Active Tolerance Summary**

The analysis of the questions specifically relating to passive tolerance indicated that this mode of tolerance was displayed by almost all the students towards all groups. A much lower proportion of students, just over 50% in the case of immigrants and those on the margins of society, displayed active tolerance. Apart from underlining the need to define what is meant by tolerance, this highlights that a difference exists between the use of these two modes of tolerance, a point returned to in the next chapter.

#### **7.5 Conclusion and Summary**

Having completed the analysis of the students' attitudes of tolerance it is now possible, in the next chapter, to return to and answer the initial research questions, and to discuss the findings in detail. Before doing so, this chapter will conclude with a summary of the findings. In all cases below, comparison is either made to the reference school (NFS), in the case of the quantitative findings, or to the other schools in the research.



### **Passive Tolerance**

- No difference was found in the attitudes of passive tolerance between the students in the faith and non-faith schools, if these dichotomous categories are used.

Differences were found between the schools.

- The MI school students showed less tolerance, and in some cases intolerance, of dissent and diversity when beliefs, behaviours or lifestyles contravened religious beliefs and teachings.
- Differences were seen in the reasoning underpinning the passive mode responses, with the MI school students tending towards an emotional response, whereas the students in the other schools were more likely to use a response based on human rights discourse.

### **Active Tolerance**

- No difference was found in the attitudes of active tolerance between the students in the faith and non-faith schools, if these dichotomous categories are used.
- The prevalence of active tolerance was less than passive tolerance in all the schools.  
Less active tolerance was shown to faith groups than to immigrants and those on the margins of society, and this was found to be common across all schools

Differences were found between the schools.

- A lower proportion of the students in the MI and ECI schools displayed active tolerance towards all the objects of tolerance (faith groups, immigrants and those on the margins of society).
- There was some evidence of the students making greater use of group identities in the MI school, and to a lesser extent in the ECI school.

In this chapter a distinction between the MI school and the other schools has gradually become more apparent. Very few differences were detected between the NFI, NFS, RCI and RCS schools. In general the ECI school responses were shown to be similar to these four schools, although when active tolerance was considered it also showed some overlap with the MI school. This difference between the MI school and the others means that the discussion in the next chapter focuses more on the MI school than the others.

The uniformity in the MI school student interview responses and their difference from the students in the other schools in the research raises the question of whether there was any selection bias in the choice of interview candidates at the MI school. With the exception of the ECI school, the interview respondents were chosen by the schools themselves and thus the method of selection was in theory consistent across all the schools. It is possible that the MI school chose a particular type of student, although background information collected on each respondent, which included degree of religious commitment and ethnicity, indicated that the students reflected a range of backgrounds. The greatest degree of uniformity was shown in the interview responses relating to faith, with a wider range of views being shown in the non-faith questions. This similarity in religious responses was consistent with the questionnaire responses in the MI school, in which all the students identified strongly with their faith, a view which was very different from all the other schools.

Two factors may have had a disproportionate effect on the MI school student responses, though I would argue that this would affect both the questionnaire and interview responses. The first is the perceived threat to Islam in the UK and the second is my position as the researcher, being white, British and assumed to be non-Muslim. Both of these factors made the situation in this school different from the others and may have meant that the MI school students were keener than their peers to present what they saw as the accepted Muslim view.

Whilst not rejecting the possibility that there may have been bias in the selection of the interview respondents, the consistency between the questionnaire and interview responses suggests little likelihood of this.

Before moving on to the discussion of the findings, and the testing of the

hypotheses, two further points should be noted which emerged in relation to strategies used in the teaching of tolerance in schools. These suggest that different approaches may be needed to encourage active and passive tolerance, as defined in the research. The findings seem to suggest that human rights discourse may be very beneficial for situations where there is considerable animosity, but that it does little to encourage students to reach the active mode of tolerance. The suggestion is also made that active tolerance may require more empathetic skills, but a form of empathy which emphasises significance to the Other, rather than just sympathy for their situation.

## Chapter 8: The Discussion

### 8.1 Introduction

In this penultimate chapter we return to the original, overall research question which asked:

**What effect do faith schools have on their students' attitudes of tolerance?**

An attempt is now made to answer that by focusing on the two sub-questions, which asked:

**Question A:**

**What differences are there in the attitudes of tolerance between students in faith schools compared with students in non-faith schools in England, and where do any differences lie?**

And

**Question B:**

**What effect does the school have on the differences in the students' attitudes of tolerance?**

This chapter is arranged in two parts corresponding to the two research questions. Part A considers whether there is a faith/non-faith divide, and discusses such differences as exist between students in the schools. As the previous chapter indicated, no differences were evident from the analysis of the questionnaire data, with all the differences emerging from the students' interview responses. It is not possible in this part to determine whether the differences are related to some aspect of the school or whether they are the result of some similarity in background characteristics, such as religious belief, of students in that particular school. Therefore no inference regarding the schools' impact on this tolerance response is made in Part A.

The impact of the school is considered in Part B, where the hypotheses generated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are tested against the findings from Chapter 7. The school impact is then discussed in more detail and tentative conclusions are drawn.

Due to the sample size and sampling methods the findings from this research only apply to the schools in the research, and cannot be generalised to the wider population of schools. Rather than drawing any firm conclusions this chapter aims to narrow the focus of the overarching research question, homing in on the areas where potential issues have been highlighted, and where more focused research is needed. Any suggestions made and explanations given are very tentative.

As has become increasingly apparent through this thesis, when comparing student attitudes of tolerance, differences were not seen between faith and non-faith schools. Instead one school, the MI school, showed differences from the other schools (RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS). As a result of this the discussion in this chapter focuses particularly on the MI school.

Within this chapter I suggest that one possible explanation for the difference between the MI school students and those in the other schools in their tolerance towards those who contravened (Islamic) religious teaching, is related to the way that the school nurtures the students' Muslim identity. This itself is connected to perceived threats to the group's self-esteem emanating both from within and outside the British Muslim community. A second possible explanation is related to particular Islamic understandings around the critical examination of the faith. I also want to emphasise that this discourse is not the only one found within Islam. However, the tendency within Islam to emphasise the unity in Islamic practice and interpretation, and to downplay diversity, can make understanding differences problematic (King, 1997). As with Christianity in the UK, within Islam there is a plurality of understandings and interpretations, which reflect the variety of origins and cultures of Muslims in the UK, and therefore any discourse should not be seen as necessarily reflecting the views of all Muslims in the UK.

Trying to categorise the various Islamic understandings using the idea of denominations, the categorisation often employed in the case of mainstream (Western) Christianity, is problematic. The denominational mode of categorisation is seen by many Muslims to inadequately reflect the reality of Islam and is thus resisted, instead references are made to different 'schools of thought'. Gilliat-Ray explains

‘because there is a core belief and practice that broadly unites Muslims across time and space. Many Muslims reject the divisiveness that is conveyed by the term ‘sectarian’ and prefer instead to talk about different ‘schools’ or ‘trends’ of thought (*maslak*)’ (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 55).

Various distinctive schools of thought can be determined within Islam in the UK, but the ‘boundaries of membership or identification are often overlapping and fluid’ (ibid, p.55), and this fluidity makes the development of frameworks with which to categorise them difficult (Gilliat-Ray, 2010; MacEoin, 2009). Because of these complexities, within this section the discussion does not attempt to associate the possible discourses referred to with any particular school of thought. In the discussion in Part A the important element to highlight is that this discourse and understanding does exist within contemporary UK Islam, rather than locating it within particular schools of thought. I firmly believe that it is important to understand the variations in UK Islam, and the ramifications of that in terms of education, but that discussion goes beyond the scope of this study.

Whilst not wanting to relate the discourses to particular schools of thought it is, I think, helpful to locate the discourses within some framework. Therefore I will employ the terms ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’, seeing these as ends of a continuum rather than as discrete categories. I recognise that these too are contested, but they are used within a variety of religious discourses including those relating to Islam, and are more helpful than many alternatives. The discourses suggested as possible explanations could therefore be seen to be towards the conservative end of the spectrum. During the discussions I have tried to reflect alternative interpretations where possible and where space permits. Finally, as was discussed in Chapter 2.4, these discourses are located in a particular context and time and as such can, and will, change.

## **8.2 Part A: Research Question A**

This section begins by considering whether there are any differences between students' attitudes of tolerance in faith and non-faith schools. It will then discuss the three differences found.

### **8.2.1 Are there any Faith/Non-Faith School Differences?**

The thrust of this whole research project was to investigate whether there was any evidence that faith schools produced less tolerant pupils than non-faith schools. Concerns about the ability of faith schools to promote tolerance were primarily based on unsubstantiated assumptions, and little empirical evidence existed to support these concerns, or conversely the claims of those involved in faith education who maintained that there was no case to answer (Grace, 2003)(Chapter 2.6). Inconsistency and imprecision around the meaning and object of tolerance in the criticisms meant that in order to answer this question in a way that could satisfy a range of critics, a variety of modes and objects of tolerance were considered. Even when all these different factors were considered, no differences were found in the attitudes of tolerance between the faith and non-faith school students when that dichotomous categorisation was considered. Moreover very little difference was seen between any of the schools and in general this research seemed to suggest that the impact of any of the schools on their students' attitudes of tolerance was limited. The findings from this research indicated the importance of various background characteristics, such as the extent to which the student had an authoritarian personality and the student's gender. A range of responses was found within each school, some of which could be termed intolerant, but generally students showed themselves to be tolerant of a range of identity markers and in a range of situations.

The findings from this research would therefore not support those who maintain that faith schools *per se* have a detrimental effect on their students' attitudes of tolerance. Certainly not all faith schools have a negative effect on their students in this respect, and no generic attitude of intolerance was found in any school. There is no 'faith school effect'. But, as will be argued in Part B, some faith schools, through some faith aspects of the school, can be seen to be having a

detrimental effect on their students' attitudes of tolerance. This research demonstrates that the situation is more complex than those who question faith schools' ability to promote tolerance suggest.

When discussing attitudes of tolerance this research suggests that the dichotomous categorisation of schools into faith and non-faith is unhelpful. The findings in respect of the three Christian schools, RCI, RCS and ECI, indicate no situation in which they all show lower tolerance. This leads to the conclusion that there is no effect which can be seen to arise from some aspect of Christianity which is common to these Christian interpretations.

The greatest difference in terms of tolerance was seen in the MI school. The students showed lower tolerance, and sometimes intolerance, towards those who contravened Islamic teaching. Being the only Muslim school in the sample it is impossible to say whether this effect is solely associated with students in this particular school, and there is a possibility that this is connected in some way to Islamic beliefs. This might indicate that these are findings which could be associated with other Muslim school students, but, as was discussed (Chapter 3.1), the sample of schools in the research means that any such grouping of Muslim schools should be considered as no more than a possibility. Nor, in this section, is the impact of the school being considered.

A second possible sub-grouping involves the ECI and the MI schools, as in both these schools the students showed lower active tolerance than students in the other schools towards all the identity markers considered (religious faith, immigrants and those on the margins of society). As will be discussed, these two schools show similarities in certain aspects of their belief, but the extent to which this can adequately explain the tolerance responses seen is questionable, and likewise this sub-grouping also becomes questionable.

In the following sections the three differences in tolerance will be discussed. The first finding is that students in all the schools showed lower active tolerance towards religious groups than towards immigrants and those on the margins of society. Although this finding does not solely relate to faith schools, nevertheless it can be seen to connect to a wider discussion around the place of religion and faith in education, within which this research is located.



The second finding to be discussed is also concerned with active tolerance, and is that the students in the MI and ECI schools showed lower active tolerance towards all the identity markers than their counterparts in the other schools.

The final finding is that the students in the MI school showed lower tolerance towards those whose behaviour contravened Islamic teachings.

### **8.2.2 Differences in Active Tolerance: Responses to the Religious Other**

In all the schools lower active tolerance was shown towards the Religious Other than towards the other markers of identity (immigrants and those on the margins of society). This discussion draws on the analysis of the interview responses to the active level tolerance questions (Chapter 7.4.2).

All the schools showed a lower proportion of their students displaying active tolerance compared with their passive tolerance responses. This finding is not unexpected, and an element of maturity is almost certainly associated with this. Many of the students at this point in their lives are not able to reach the levels of maturity needed to operate at this degree of abstraction, but it cannot be assumed that they will not reach that stage in later years (Jones, 1980a). Although differences in cognitive sophistication can explain differences between the active and passive tolerant responses they cannot adequately explain the differences noted between specific groups.

What was noted in the responses was that the students seemed to see religious groups as bounded or separate autonomous groups, which meant that the students felt less inclined, or able, to interact with them. Overlapping with this was a weak understanding of the significance that a place of worship might have for a person or group, or any sense of connection with that group. In the case of the immigrants and those on the margins of society this separation was rarely seen, with the students feeling able to interact with, and assist, these groups, and having a sense that they had some responsibility towards them. Why this lower active tolerance towards the Religious Other compared with the other groups should be a common finding across all the schools is difficult to comprehend with any clarity or certainty.

Were the difference to be found only in the faith schools then Social Identity Theory (SIT) could offer a possible explanation in that the students (employing their religious social identity) might see the Religious Other as a rival group, a relevant out-group, and thus discriminate against this group (Herriot, 2007). While I am not discounting this as a possible explanation in the case of some faith school students, it seems unlikely that this would hold in the same way and to the same extent across the non-faith schools as well. Moreover, it is hard to envisage a clear group identity that could apply in the non-faith context.

In the discussion that follows, two discourses – multiculturalism and secularism – are suggested as possibly influencing the students' responses towards the Religious Other, which could account for the differences noted. The literature around both concepts is immense<sup>352</sup> and so the following discussion only engages with the essential arguments, which themselves are presented here in the briefest form. None of the suggested explanations given in this section are to be seen as mutually exclusive; rather, the students' attitudes are, I feel, likely to reflect a combination of influences. Certainly the data have not indicated that the students in any school favour a particular discourse, but more focused research is needed before any of these explanations can be proposed with any certainty.

I think that in this research the student responses towards the Religious Other indicate the influence of a particular form of multicultural discourse, one which would be seen by Amartya Sen as 'plural monoculturalism' (Sen, 2006, p. 156), a multiculturalism in which different cultures 'might pass each other like ships in the night' (ibid, p. 156).

Sen (2006) proposes that there are two distinguishable approaches to multiculturalism. In the first, diversity is celebrated for the freedoms this enables there to be in a person's life. A society in which there are diverse cultures allows a person to choose which associations and identities are important to them, and in addition the presence of many different cultures and identities opens up the range of possibilities from which they can choose. In the other approach diversity becomes a value in itself, not in terms of what it can provide for an individual. This

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<sup>352</sup> See for example (Race, 2011) for a discussion of multiculturalism.

second type of multiculturalism can also be seen to involve an essentialising of cultural communities, in particular religious communities. Here cultural practices are imposed in 'the name of the "culture of the community"' (Sen, 2006, p. 152). Although essentialising is not seen as a necessary element of multiculturalism (Modood, 2007), it is nevertheless seen by some as an important and persistent element of UK political discourse on multiculturalism (Baumann, 1996; Sen, 2006). Sen maintains that British policy does not encourage people from different communities to interact with civil society as individuals, but instead leads to their interactions being mediated through their own 'community', one which is increasingly related to ethnic and religious divisions (Phillips, 2005).

It is this second form of multiculturalism discourse which appears to be influencing the students' reaction to the Religious Other, as this form emphasises the separateness and difference which is precisely what has been noted in a number of the student responses. The students' lower active tolerance, which is seen to result from their reluctance to engage with the Religious Other, can be related to an understanding of multiculturalism which promotes diversity for its own sake, and which presents the other as a separate, essentialised community.

The possible negative effects in terms of tolerance that have been suggested by this research, and their relationship to the plural monocultural form of multiculturalism, are not novel (see for example Alibhai-Brown, 2000). Two high-profile comments in this area have been made by Trevor Phillips and David Cameron. In 2005 Phillips linked the 7/7 bombings in London to multiculturalism policies in the UK, which he saw as having produced a situation in which 'we are becoming strangers to each other, and we are leaving communities to be marooned outside the mainstream' (Phillips, 2005, p. 5). Recently David Cameron (2011) went further than merely seeing negative effects, suggesting that this form of multiculturalism has in fact failed, and had resulted in increased tension between communities and groups, again linking the policy to terrorism.

If the students are understanding diversity as a value in itself, and as such are interacting through communities, this may be enough to produce the differences in their active tolerance. But as multiculturalism focuses on ethnic as well as religious groupings it does not provide an adequate explanation as to why

religious groups should be viewed differently by the students. The following possible influence on the students' attitudes relates to two strands of discourse which can be seen to be encompassed by the broader notion of secularisation. These discourses, which relate solely to religion (Casanova, 1994), could go some way to explaining the difference in attitude towards the Religious Other. Before commencing the discussion it should be noted that confusion can arise when discussing this subject due to the inconsistent use of secularisation and related terms (ibid). The second point to mention is that in this discussion the focus is on the fact that the discourse is commonly encountered in contemporary British society, not the debates surrounding it.

Secularisation is seen as an historical process (Casanova, 1994), 'the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance' (Wilson, 1969, p. 14) (see also Modood, 2007; Norman, 2002; Taylor, 1998; and Trigg, 2007). But Casanova (1994) would see this broad process as multidimensional, and as incorporating three strands of secularisation discourse which are linked, but which do not necessarily follow on from each other. The first strand relates to a decline in formal religious belief and practice, the second refers to the differentiation of the secular sphere from religious institutions and norms (the separation of Church and State), and the third to the 'marginalisation of religion to a privatised world' (James, 2011). It is the first and third of these which, I suggest, are potentially the most influential with respect to the students' toleration of the Religious Other.

Although its roots can be traced to Durkheim and Weber (Casanova, 1994; Smith, 2008) secularisation as a sociological theory emerged in the 1960s (Smith, 2008; Wilson, 1969) and concluded that the decline in church attendance meant that religion would gradually wither from public life, and might eventually vanish altogether (Casanova, 1994; Smith, 2008). This supposedly inevitable decline has proved not to be the case (Casanova, 1994; James, 2011; Smith, 2008; Trigg, 2007). As has been widely noted, the decline in religious attendance has only been witnessed in Western Europe, with most other parts of the world, including the USA, experiencing an increase in attendance (Casanova, 1994; Smith, 2008). But even in Western Europe this decline in formal religious practice has not been

accompanied by a similar decline in belief in God, or an adoption of atheism (Smith, 2008). This has led some people to contend that what is being witnessed is not a decline, but a 'transformation in the understanding of religion' (Norman, 2002, p. viii), or as Professor Grace Davie terms it, 'believing without belonging' (Davie 2000 cited in Smith, 2008). Nevertheless despite these doubters, secularisation theory is persistent in many quarters, including religious ones, being taken as 'fact' (Casanova, 1994; James, 2011; Smith, 2008).

The decline in *formal* religious belief and practice in Europe, which is supported by empirical studies, although even here caution needs to be applied (Smith, 2008), could be seen as a possible influence on the students' attitudes towards the Religious Other. The decline of formal religious belief and practice could create a situation where there is a lack of religious literacy among the students, with students in non-faith schools only irregularly encountering expressions of formal religious practice and belief. Whereas this may be the case for some students in the non-faith schools it is hard to see that this can be the case in any of the faith schools, where faith is a major constituent of daily life, even if it is not within their home life.

The second strand of discourse which could potentially be influencing the students, still under the secularisation umbrella, can be related to secularism, which Smith defines as a 'way of thinking about the world and life which makes no reference to supernatural beliefs' (Smith, 2008, p. 22). This discourse sees religion being marginalised from society and public life, and placed in the private sphere, and is seen to have its origins in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment (Casanova, 1994; Smith, 2008; Trigg, 2007).

The justification for the marginalisation of religion from the public to the private sphere revolves around issues concerning the rational verification of truth claims (Trigg, 2007), in which the truth claims made by religion are seen as being closed to external verification. In contrast, science is seen to be based on reason, and to have recognised methods of verification (Smith, 2008; Trigg, 2007). The public sphere is viewed by some, such as Charles Taylor, as something which publically engages everyone, and where people can come to a common mind about important matters (Trigg, 2007). Others though would consider the public sphere as

being governed by rationality, and therefore only things which can be rationally verified belong in that sphere; principally this means science and 'facts' based on scientific reason (Bader, 1999; Smith, 2008; Trigg, 2007). Religion is not such a thing. Moreover in a pluralist society any disputes between religions have no means of settlement, and thus the only way to avoid conflict is to keep these beliefs in the private sphere (Trigg, 2007). In consequence religious belief is considered by many as 'a menace to the establishment of a shared rationality' (Trigg, 2007, p. 191), and consequently should not have a place within this sphere. This area is clearly a contested one. Taylor says that 'what the unbelieving "secularist" sees as a necessary policing of the boundary of a common independent public sphere, will often be perceived by the religious as a gratuitous extrusion of religion in the name of a rival metaphysical belief' (Taylor, 1998, p. 36). Certainly some of those who do not support the privatisation of religions would consider that the privileging of scientific reasoning is itself arbitrary (Parekh 1996 cited in Bader, 1999). Others would go further, claiming that secularists who 'deny temporary legitimacy of religions in human life and society' (Madan, 1998, p. 313) are themselves operating a form of 'fundamentalist secularism' (Bader, 1999, p. 609), and as such are no better than the religious zealots they criticise.

Different expressions of secularism and secularisation exist in different countries. England may be a constitutionally Christian country, where Church and State are intimately linked, but the privatisation of religion discourse is seen as strong, at least within intellectual and government circles (Smith, 2008; Trigg, 2007). This can be illustrated by the incident in 2003 when Alastair Campbell, one of Tony Blair's senior advisors, stopped Blair answering a question on his religious beliefs saying 'We don't do God' (Telegraph, 2003), a remark which can be seen to indicate the removal of religion from the public sphere at the highest level of government.

But what effect might this discourse be having on the students' attitudes of tolerance towards the Religious Other? This discourse which places religion in the private sphere removes religion and its relevance from public life, again adding to its unfamiliarity. One effect of this is to make religious belief appear less valuable; it becomes merely a matter of personal choice. Moreover placing religion in the

private sphere makes it exactly that, a private matter, and emphasises that it is not anyone else's business. Both of these impressions could increase the sense of distance and separateness that the multicultural discourse emphasises through its essentialising of religion. Unlike the discourse around the decline of formal religion, which it was suggested would be less of an influence in the faith schools than the non-faith schools, this 'privatisation and marginalisation discourse' can apply to the religious and non-religious alike. Although this second discourse may be rejected within the school, nevertheless it is part of the students' wider experience.

### **8.2.3 The MI and ECI Schools and Lower Active Tolerance**

The second finding to be discussed is that the ECI and MI students showed less active tolerance than students in the other schools towards all the identity markers, and not just towards other faith groups. The ECI and MI schools are similar to each other, and differ from the other schools in this research in that they are both small, have limited facilities, and a proportion of their staff have no professional UK teaching qualification. The most marked difference between these two schools and the others is that both the MI and ECI schools are connected to faith groups which subscribe to what could be termed an exclusive view of salvation, and certainly a number of the students in these schools reflected that belief (Chapter 2.4.1). Exclusivist beliefs relate to the view that salvation is only open to those who are members of the faith (Strange, 2008). Thus it would be pointless, not to say damaging, to the Other concerned, to encourage them in the errant belief which will ultimately lead to their damnation. Although this would offer a convincing explanation for the lower active tolerance shown by the students in the MI and ECI schools in respect of the Religious Other, it is hard to see why this should extend to immigrants or those on the margins of society.

That this finding applied to all the specified groups in the case of the MI and ECI schools may indicate that students in these schools were displaying lower levels of cognitive sophistication (Vogt, 1997). As the research did not include a measure of cognitive sophistication this can only be a suggestion, and indicates that this is an area where more research is needed. Nevertheless, as will be discussed in Part B, this research indicates that practices within the MI school may be restricting the

development of skills related to cognitive sophistication. Furthermore whilst it did not appear that critical reasoning was being limited by the ECI school, nevertheless, at some points in the analysis relating to cognitive sophistication, similarities were seen between the ECI and MI student responses. This similarity in responses lends support to the suggestion that differences between the levels of active tolerance shown by the MI and ECI students, and those in the other schools, may be due to differences in the students' cognitive reasoning abilities, but this is still very speculative. It may, of course, be that there is no common explanation which covers both schools.

The lack of any plausible explanation for differences seen for this particular finding means that no conclusion can be drawn on whether the MI and ECI schools form a faith school sub-group when considering the effect of faith schools on tolerance.

#### **8.2.4 The MI School and Behaviour which Contravenes Islamic Teachings**

Compared with the students in the other five schools, those in the MI school showed lower tolerance towards people whose behaviour contravened their own (Islamic) religious teaching (Chapter 7.3.2.b). Two main characteristics can be seen to differentiate the students in the Muslim school from those in the other schools. The first is religion, and the second is that all the students are from immigrant backgrounds. In addition the religion itself differs in two ways from the faith associated with the other faith schools in this research. The first is the belief itself, Islam as opposed to Christianity, and the second is its status in England. For many within the UK Islam is seen as a minority religion which is not native to this country, and is associated with immigrants, but also one which is associated with terrorism and is seen as antithetical to Western values and ways of life (Abbas, 2005). All of these factors may lower the perceived status of this faith in the UK context, as well as increasing a perception that it is under threat by, or poses a threat to, wider society. In Section 8.3.5 this perception of threat can be seen to have an impact on tolerance, but here it was the difference in belief which was the salient factor.

In this section I would like to tentatively suggest that one possible explanation for the differences in responses between the MI students and those in



the other schools can be linked to particular religious discourses found within Islam, which predominantly focus on the concept of the law and authority. These interpretations can be found within Islam, but, as was made clear in the introduction, are not the only ones existing, and therefore not all Muslims, or even all the students in the MI school, would subscribe to them. Within any religion the reasons why certain interpretations and discourses are adopted are complex and dependent on a range of factors including perceived threat, perceived status, and dislocation from one's own culture. As these factors change so too can the adoption of a particular interpretation, or at least the way it is manifested in the wider community. Throughout this discussion comparisons will be made to Christianity and, unless otherwise stated, this implies mainstream Christian discourses found in the UK today, which would include Roman Catholic and Evangelical understandings found within the faith groups associated with the schools in this research.

In order to understand the discourses which offer a possible explanation for the views of the Muslim students, we need to begin by considering what is fundamental to Muslim belief, and most crucially, the importance of the law within that. For a Muslim the Qur'an is the revealed word of God, but for many it is more than that in that it is considered as a revealed totality. Its completeness means that as well as containing all knowledge and 'The Truth', it is also a revealed way of life, and as such it is also the law. As Ruthven writes 'In Islam "God has not revealed Himself and His nature, but rather His law' (2000, p. 73). Sniderman and Hagendoorn's explanation describes this link well when they observe that 'religion is integral to Muslims' concept of governance. A "Muslim Society" is not primarily a society of Muslims. It is a society where God-given law makes people Muslims' (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2009, p. 129). This understanding of Islam is therefore about obeying and carrying out God's laws.

Helpful to this discussion are the notions of orthodoxy, right belief, and orthopraxy, right action. Esposito (1998), amongst others, would see Islam as being a religion in which an emphasis is placed on orthopraxy, the emphasis on correct performance of *salah* (five daily prayers) can be seen to illustrate this. He sees this emphasis on orthopraxy as greater in Islam than in most interpretations of Christianity.

But another difference, which is important for us in understanding the student responses, also emerges from a particular understanding of the law. In Christianity the separation of religious authority from temporal jurisdiction has always been a valid concept, having its justification in the Gospels<sup>353</sup>. At times political power has been intimately connected to the Church (an institution which has no direct equivalent in Islam), for example in the Byzantine Empire (Ware, 1993). Nevertheless, at its core Christianity subscribes to the belief that separation of Church and State is not only possible, but desirable (Hamburger, 2002). In Islam a consequence of the totality of the Qur'an is the understanding that there is no concept of law outside the religious law; there is no human legislative power (Lewis, 2003). This also relates to the State's function which exists, not in its own right, but as 'an instrument of Islam' (Lewis, 2003, p. 101).

The lack of recognition of any law other than the religious, means that problems may arise when Muslims are living in a non-Muslim state. However, the concept of *darura* or 'necessity' enables Muslims to engage with wider society by allowing for the accommodation of practices which would not be permitted within a predominantly Islamic society (Ansari, 2000; Ramadan, 1999). Within Britain many Muslims employ this concept, considering that although some contradictions exist between Islamic and British law, non-compliance with statute law is not appropriate, although they may work to change or modify the law to better comply with Islamic understandings (Ramadan, 1999). A few do not subscribe to the notion of *darura*, and in this situation the response tends to be separation of the community from the mainstream (Ansari, 2000).

Following on from the conceptualisation of the law is the notion of personal autonomy. It is too simplistic to say that personal autonomy does not exist within Islam, although Arkoun would argue that the lack of a critical theological tradition makes it difficult for contemporary notions of the person and the optimum development of that person to emerge within conservative Islam. He strongly asserts that 'struggles for respect for the rights of man, woman and child are joined

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<sup>353</sup> Matt 22.21 where Jesus is reported as saying in response to a question on the payment of taxes 'render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's'.

in every country and every regime in which Islam, Islamic Tradition and *shari'a* remain points of reference that are impossible to bypass.' (Arkoun, 2006, p. 296).

Differences are seen to exist in the way that personal autonomy is conceptualised in some interpretations of Islam when compared to the Western liberal tradition, in which it is broadly related to 'the capacity to freely form and pursue a conception of the good' (Merry, 2007, p. 9). An Islamic notion of personal autonomy can be seen to have its origins again in the law which contains all truth. Faith and belief, in some interpretations, is not to be worked out through individual study, as it has already been given, rather the task is to understand that received knowledge (Halstead, 2004). Choice comes in either rejection or acceptance of this total system of beliefs. As Halstead explains 'the task of individuals is to come to understand this knowledge and exercise their free will to choose which path to follow ' (Halstead, 2004, p. 524). In addition a strong element of communitarianism can be detected within Islam which can also be seen to be linked to a low recognition of personal autonomy (Sen, 2006), and the restriction of individual freedoms (Jafari, 1993).

Here then we perhaps begin to understand why contraventions of Islamic beliefs were not easily tolerated by many students in the Muslim school. First of all, for some believers in Islam, actions carry a significance which is greater than the significance many Christians would associate with an action, even one which is seen as prohibited. To act in contravention of divine law is to go against God, almost to deny God, and as such cannot and should not be tolerated.

In some of the student responses a distinction was made between the Muslim and the non-Muslim friend, whereas others made no distinction. One possible explanation for this difference could relate to differences within the UK Muslim communities over the application of *darura* in relation to the law. Those who distinguish between their friends could be seen to be reflecting the understanding that Islamic law, in non-Islamic societies, does not apply universally. In contrast those who see the rule as applying universally could be rejecting the notion of *darura* in this situation. Another difference seen between some MI students' responses and those from the students in the other schools, may also be related to the rejection of *darura*. A desire to separate themselves from the person

or action was seen in some MI student responses (although not all). Boys in Duncan's (2006) study into homophobia and school bullying also talked about casting out friends if they were discovered to be homosexual, and thus this response may be a common response when the degree of disapproval is strong, rather than actually having a religious cause. However, the discourses discussed did highlight that where tensions exist between Islamic and secular law, and Islamic law was considered to apply universally (and therefore *darura* is rejected), separation is an observed response. Thus the students' response of separation in this particular case may reflect a more widely condoned response in situations where there are differences which relate to religious beliefs.

The second element of difference noted between the MI school and other responses was the lack of recognition of personal autonomy. Again here I would like to suggest that this too could involve a religious element, in that it could be seen to be related to differences in the conceptualisation of personal autonomy that exist between some Islamic and liberal Western discourses, which were described above. The exercise of free will in some understandings of Islam primarily relates to the choice to be a Muslim. Once this decision has been made one's life is governed by a given set of rules meaning that choice within that is limited. Consequently, in the scenario, the decision for the Muslim friend whether to drink or not was not considered by some respondents to be a personal choice, as it was in the Christian case. Instead by accepting the Muslim faith they had already made that choice not to drink.

The above discussion has suggested that the MI school students' responses towards those whose behaviour contravened religious teaching may be rooted in particular Islamic understandings, and that this can be seen to account for the difference in tolerance responses. However, this finding and the subsequent discussion does not comment on the role of the school in this. The extent to which these interpretations of Islam are found within other school populations cannot be commented on without further research. But the linking of this attitude to particular religious discourses does raise the possibility that it might also be encountered within other Muslim schools in which the students subscribe to similar interpretations. This is clearly an area where there is need for further research.

### **8.2.5 Part A: A Brief Summary**

Before moving on to discuss the impact of the school, the major points raised so far will be briefly summarised. There is no evidence that, compared to non-faith schools, faith schools *per se* detrimentally affect their students' attitudes of tolerance, however this term is understood. The Religious Other is a problematic identity marker, but only at the level of active tolerance and within all schools, not just faith schools. Two discourses within society, multiculturalism and secularism/secularisation, were suggested as possible influences on the students' responses towards this group. The students in two of the faith schools did show differences in tolerance. In the MI school the students showed that they were less tolerant, and sometimes intolerant, to those whose behaviour contravened religious teaching. This was seen to reflect Islamic discourses relating to the law and authority, and thus it was suggested that this response might be seen from other Muslim students and other Muslim schools. At this stage the role of the school in this has not been ascertained. The students in the MI and the ECI schools showed lower levels of active tolerance towards all the identity markers considered in the active level questions. Why this might be so was unclear, although a possible explanation was that the students in these schools showed lower cognitive sophistication.

### **8.3 Part B: Research Question B**

The discussion now focuses on the second research question, which considers the impact that the schools themselves may be having on their students' attitudes of tolerance. The analysis of the questionnaire data did allow for conclusions to be drawn regarding whether a school had an impact in respect of certain identity markers. But, as became evident in the previous chapter, the questionnaire data showed no school effect. The questionnaire did not, and was never intended to, cover all understandings of tolerance, but it did prove less effective than the interviews at exploring active tolerance.

It was therefore the interview data which elicited the differences in tolerance, but, as was discussed in Chapter 3, trying to ascertain which aspect of the school might have impacted on that attitude is problematic when using this

type of approach. The analysis of the schools in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 allowed hypotheses to be generated, which were related to aspects of the schools which were potentially problematic for the promotion of tolerance. In this section those four hypotheses will be tested against the findings generated from the analysis of the students' responses to the tolerance questions posed in the interviews, and the possible role of the school will be discussed.

### 8.3.1 Hypothesis I: Tolerance of the Religious Other.

- ***Hypothesis I: The students in the RCI, RCS, ECI, MI and NFI schools will show lower attitudes of tolerance towards those of other faiths than towards other groups, due to the lack of contact with other faiths that the school provides. The tolerance shown will be similar across the RCI, RCS, ECI, MI and NFI schools, but will be lower than that shown in the NFS school.***

When active tolerance is considered Hypothesis I is to some extent satisfied. Although the situation is complex, nevertheless it can be tentatively suggested that all the schools, with the exception of the NFS school, in some way impact negatively on their students' responses to the Religious Other.

The questionnaire responses to active tolerance of the Religious Other (Chapter 7.4.1) found that there were no significant differences between the schools. All the average tolerance scores were well above 3.0, which indicates that the majority of students are actively tolerant towards this group. This finding was supported by the student interview responses to teaching about other faiths, where in all the schools the students were positive about this. Although similarities were found between the RCI, RCS, ECI, MI, and NFI schools, as predicted, tolerance was not lower than in the NFS school.

When active tolerance towards the Religious Other was compared with that shown towards other groups, in this case immigrants and those on the margins of society (Chapter 7.4.2) then differences were seen. In the RCI, RCS, ECI, MI and NFI schools lower active tolerance was shown towards the Religious Other than towards other groups, and therefore this part of the hypothesis is supported. As was discussed earlier in this chapter (Section 8.4) the students in the MI and ECI

schools showed lower active tolerance towards both the Religious Other and the non-religious groups than the students in the RCI, RCS and NFI schools, and therefore the schools do not show similar levels of tolerance as predicted by the hypothesis. This indicates that the school is not involved directly in the creation of the difference between the ECI and MI students and the RCI, RCS and NFI students in this regard.

Unfortunately only one of the NFS school interview responses relating to the Religious Other could be analysed in terms of tolerance, and so the following discussion and conclusions do not include this school.

The analysis of the schools suggested that in the faith schools the aspect of the school responsible for the difference in tolerance was that the students did not have any form of contact with the Religious Other. Here contact encompasses both knowledge and understanding about, as well as direct contact with, the Religious Other in the students' daily school life. In the NFI school the important aspect was interaction on the basis of religion, which referred to some form of emotional contact, in particular an understanding of the significance of religion in a person's life and seeing religion as a lived reality. One suggestion which arises from this finding is that different skills are required for the development of active and passive tolerance. It would seem to indicate that knowledge, understanding and emotional contact are not required for the development of passive tolerance, or are only required at a quite minimal level, but are important for developing active tolerance.

The evidence that students in all the faith schools showed less active tolerance towards other faiths than towards other groups is in line with what the Contact Hypothesis (Vogt, 1997) (Chapter 2.5.4) would predict. Direct contact with those of other faiths was found to be absent from all the faith schools in this research, and teaching about other faiths is also minimal. Thus the schools provide little opportunity for their students to gain any knowledge or understanding of the Religious Other.

As has been discussed the aspect of the faith schools which was seen to negatively impact on tolerance was the lack of contact with the Religious Other provided for students at the school. The NFI school students came from a range of faith backgrounds and all the major faiths found in the UK were taught in RE.

However, it appeared to be the inability of the school to help its students develop an emotional connection to the Religious Other which was impacting negatively on its students' attitudes of tolerance. Based on the school data it was felt that the students in the faith schools would be able to appreciate religion in the life of the Religious Other and make an emotional connection by extrapolation from their own experience, either from their own faith or through seeing a religious life lived out through the school. This is an assumption around which more research may be needed, and therefore the following discussion about the non-faith schools may (and I feel probably does) have resonance within the faith schools too.

In the NFI school the students were taught about other faiths and interacted on a daily basis with people from a variety of faith backgrounds, and yet also showed lower active tolerance towards the Religious Other than towards immigrants and those on the margins of society, with the proportion of students displaying active tolerance being similar to that in the RCI and RCS schools. At first glance these findings appear to contradict the Contact Hypothesis, in that there was contact through teaching and through the school's religiously diverse population. But as has been discussed, the Contact Hypothesis does not consider that mixing, on its own, is enough to increase tolerance, and more exacting criteria need to be satisfied for the contact to have a positive effect on tolerance (Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux, 2005). Included amongst these more exacting criteria (section 2.5.4) is the need for this to be a deep form of contact which enables the development of an emotional connection. It is precisely this emotional connection with the Religious Other, in particular the students' understanding of the significance of religion in a person's life, that the NFI school seems to be developing less effectively in its students, and thus it can be seen that this finding too is in line with the Contact Hypothesis.

What this finding highlights is that having a mixed pupil intake, and even an RE syllabus which includes studying a variety of faiths, is not sufficient for generating active tolerance. Thus faith schools having more open admission policies and teaching other faiths may not make their students more actively tolerant towards other faith groups, as some critics of faith schools suggest (Guardian, 2001b; National Secular Society, 2006). Instead it appears to be the



quality of contact which is most important for the transformation of attitudes. As discussed in Chapter 2.5.4 the type of contact which is advocated is one in which underlying tensions are tackled, rather than one in which difference is explored superficially (Donnelly and Hughes, 2006). It also needs to enable students to emotionally engage with each other (Rutter, 2005; Yablon, 2011). Although this aspect of the school is not solely the preserve of Religious Education, it is certainly the most likely place for students to encounter other faiths. Whilst the next part of the discussion will look at RE, we need also to consider the portrayal of religion in schools and education in a wider context.

The English education system is considered by many to be underpinned by a secular humanist foundation (Copley, 2005; Copley, 2010; Gokulsing, 2006; Grimmitt, 2010b; Thompson, 2010) in which religion is seen as a 'lifestyle option' (Thompson, 2010, p. 145), and firmly in the private sphere. Some involved in faith education, such as Brenda Almond (2010), would detect anti-religious elements from secular humanism within this discourse, which is seen as being driven by the 'New Atheists' (Grimmitt, 2010b). Others highlight situations in which the secular humanist discourse is so ingrained in society that its assumptions are rarely challenged (Thompson, 2010). The education system itself is being seen as increasingly emphasising secular values as outcomes (Gokulsing, 2006), or as Copley (2010) describes it, education has become a machine 'which with adjustments as required can be programmed to deliver "goods" i.e. things which are deemed to be socially good' (ibid, p.45). The consequence of this for students is that education, outside RE, can easily and legitimately become devoid of any religious encounter. Ipgrave (2011) highlights the way schools embrace what she terms 'identity based inclusion', which relates to inclusion of diversity in terms of things such as dress, food and prayer facilities. But she maintains that, within the curriculum, inclusion of any other world view, such as a religious world view, 'epistemological inclusion' as she terms it, is frequently lacking. Apart from again failing to provide a place where students can engage with religion as a lived reality, this can also be seen to place religious beliefs in the personal sphere. Thus potentially the whole school environment in non-faith schools, rather than challenging the secularist discourse

prevalent in wider society, can be seen to reinforce the otherness of the religious person, as well as to devalue the religious aspect of the person.

The ineffectiveness of RE in providing the necessary opportunity for students to encounter religion as a lived reality, and as something which has the potential to change and influence a person's life, is part of a wider debate over RE (Copley, 2010; Grimmit, 2010b). This debate includes concerns about the RE syllabus and the way that it is seen to be increasingly influenced by a secular humanist world view (Thompson, 2010). A consistent feature of the Non-Statutory National Framework for Religious Education (DCSF, 2010) has been the two attainment targets; learning about religion, and learning from religion. Grimmit (2010b) suggests that these can provide opportunities for students to reflect on the significance of faith, but that these opportunities are rarely used effectively, with the 'learning from' element often being tagged on to the end of the lesson as an afterthought, rather than being integral; thus its impact is being reduced. Other concerns are expressed about the various approaches taken, in particular those which take a thematic or comparative approach. These approaches can objectify religion, and as a consequence little space is left for understanding religion and religious belief as a significant aspect of a person's life (Copley, 2005). Nevertheless others would see some contemporary approaches to RE, such as the phenomenological approach, as being able to relate the significance of belief to the religious object, ritual or custom (Jackson, 2004, p. 29). Ipgrave (1999) however, raises a relevant point here in highlighting the conflicts which can occur in the classroom situation when 'official significance', (what the teacher has understood a ritual or practice to signify) differs from the significance which students themselves may attach to it. These conflicts, if mishandled, could perhaps lead to a lowering of the impact of learning about the significance of religion in a person's life.

Collective worship is another place where religion can be encountered. But too often fears about how to manage diversity of beliefs within schools mean that this becomes more about giving a moral message (Copley, 2005), developing a 'willingness to think', which Cheetham (2000) sees as a secular attribute, rather than related to any commitment to belief. The emphasis on the moral message

results in religion being marginalised, with faith being presented as subjective, private and a personal choice (ibid).

Although the RE syllabus in particular appears to have the potential to help students to engage emotionally with the Religious Other, the secularist underpinnings of the education system seem to mitigate against this. Instead what is seen is a system which reinforces the notion of religion being a private matter, and thus something which, being in the private sphere, we have no right to interfere with, or else it is seen as a lifestyle choice which is less worthy of our assistance.

Before leaving this section I would like to raise a final issue. RE is considered an important vehicle for delivering the Community Cohesion agenda (Thompson, 2010), and this research would support the Government's policy position that RE can be beneficial for the development of at least one aspect of Community Cohesion: tolerance. But I would argue that this research has highlighted the importance of schools, and in particular RE, engaging with religion and faith as a lived reality, to the development of active tolerance. The implicit focus of this discussion has been on religion as a lived reality for an individual, but there is almost certainly a need to extend this to religion as a lived reality in a wider societal understanding (Grimmitt, 2010a). In order to do this it is necessary to focus on the religious content, rather than representing religions as 'socially harmless' (Copley, 2010, p. 46) and consequently emptying them of any meaning, which some working in the RE field would maintain is the notion which underpins the current educational policy, and is what occurs in many English schools (Copley, 2005).

This chapter has highlighted the importance of RE for developing active tolerance and, as has been discussed, education policy reflects this view. It is therefore worrying that two recent policy changes should now be putting the existence of RE in the curriculum in doubt. The introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is of great concern to those involved in faith education and to RE teachers (CES, 2011; Church Times, 2011). The EBacc has replaced the previously used measure of a secondary school's performance, which was calculated on the number of students achieving five A\*-C grades at GCSE (including English and Maths) (DfE, 2011a). The EBacc is based on a limited selection of GCSE

subjects, which does not include RE. Unsurprisingly the expectation is that schools will now focus heavily on subjects which will count towards the EBacc, meaning that the others, including RE, will be neglected<sup>354</sup> (BBC News, 2011).

The second policy change is the reduction in the number of initial teacher training places available for RE, which has meant the closure and amalgamation of PGCE RE courses (TES, 2011). The concern which arises from this is that RE will increasingly be taught by non-specialists, and consequently the standard of teaching and learning will be diminished<sup>355</sup>.

Both of these changes are only coming into force as I write, and therefore it is only possible to speculate on the likely consequences of their implementation. Nevertheless these changes have prompted concerns in my mind about the effect that they might have on tolerance. The implementation of the EBacc is liable to reduce the amount of time allocated for RE and consequently the amount of time available to help the students develop an emotional connection with the Religious Other. The effectiveness of RE in developing active tolerance does to some extent rest on discussing subjects which are sensitive. Non-specialists, who are less confident with the subject matter and the debates, are likely to be reluctant to engage with some of the more controversial topics. Therefore the reduction in the number of PGCE places for RE, and the subsequent reliance on non-specialist staff may mean that schools become less effective in helping their students develop active tolerance towards the Religious Other.

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<sup>354</sup> Informal discussion with Liz Wolverson, Director of Schools Support, London Diocesan Board for Schools, June 2011.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid

### 8.3.2 Hypothesis II: Those of a Different Socio-Economic Status

- ***Hypothesis II: The students in the RCS, ECI, MI, NFI and NFS schools will show similar attitudes of tolerance towards those of a different socio-economic status, and the students in the RCI school will show lower tolerance towards those of lower socio-economic status, due to the lack of contact with this group within the RCI school.***

This hypothesis was not confirmed. After controlling for background characteristics, the questionnaire data showed no significant differences in tolerance towards those of different socio-economic status between any of the schools, which indicated that little variation existed between the schools. The RCI students did show the lowest tolerance of all the schools towards this group (as indicated by the standardised  $\beta$  coefficient), but the average tolerance score of 4.2 indicated that the students in the RCI school were still very tolerant of the group. In addition the qualitative data gave no indication that the RCI students were showing less tolerance to those of a lower socio-economic status.

### 8.3.3 Hypotheses III and IV

- ***Hypothesis III: The students in the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS schools will show similar attitudes of tolerance, and the students in the MI school will show lower tolerance, towards those who contravene (Islamic) religious teaching, due to the failure of the MI school to develop a higher level of cognitive sophistication in its students***
- ***Hypothesis IV: The students in the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS schools will show similar attitudes of tolerance, and the MI school students will show lower attitudes of tolerance, towards non-Muslims and 'non-proper' Muslims, due to their religious (social) identity***

The first of the final two hypotheses predicted that the MI school students would show low tolerance (compared with the other schools' students attitudes of tolerance), towards those whose behaviour contravened (Islamic) religious teachings and that the school was involved in this through the less effective development of cognitive skills. The second hypothesis, which is somewhat ill-defined, predicted that the MI students would show lower tolerance than the other

schools' students, in terms of their attitudes towards non-Muslims and 'non-proper' Muslims, with the school's involvement relating to the formation of the group religious identity. Although they are initially considered separately, it can be seen that both hypotheses relate to a situation where a religious teaching has been contravened. This thesis will make the case that both hypotheses are supported, but as both predict the same outcome there is a possibility that only one of the school aspects is influencing the students' attitude. This discussion will therefore go on to consider whether these two aspects of the school, the formation of the religious identity and the development of cognitive sophistication, are sufficient individually to produce the tolerance outcome seen, or whether there might be an interaction effect and how this might be investigated further.

#### **8.3.3.a Hypothesis III**

The first of the two hypotheses, Hypothesis III, is supported. No difference was found between students' attitudes of tolerance towards those whose behaviour contravened their religious teachings in the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS schools. The student interview responses in all these schools saw their faith and non-faith friends as having autonomy and being free to make their own decisions. Compared to the other schools, the MI school students did show lower tolerance towards people in situations where their behaviour contravened religious teaching. As discussed in the last section, this lower tolerance was not towards a named group, for example homosexuals or Christians, but instead related to specific instances where the behaviour of a person or group contravened Islamic teaching. In this section the discussion is not concerned, as it was in the previous section, with why this might be, from a theological point of view, but instead with the way that the school impacts on the formation of this position. In this hypothesis the students' attitude was connected to their lack of cognitive sophistication and related cognitive skills, such as critical reasoning, which the MI school appeared to be developing less effectively in its students.

As was discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.5.2, cognitive sophistication is seen to help students process the complex and large amounts of information available to them in today's world, enabling them, amongst other things, to

evaluate competing truth claims (Vogt, 1997). Without this ability it is much harder for students to appreciate and consider alternative points of view (de Witte, 1999). This was noticeable in the MI student responses, in that these students rarely referred to an alternative position or considered the situation from another's point of view. For example in the interview where Noor said that she would ask her friend to stop drinking alcohol in her presence (Chapter 7.3.2) there was no appreciation of another's right, or that another might legitimately hold a different view of the situation.

I would like to tentatively suggest that one possible explanation for the difference in the cognitive skills found in the MI school might be the extent to which, and the way in which, some Muslims see that the Qur'an can be interpreted and examined critically. Although somewhat contested, as will be discussed in more detail below, both interpretation and critical examination of the Qur'an is seen to be more limited within the more conservative interpretations of Islam practised by some Muslims in the UK, than is the case with respect to the Bible within mainstream UK Christianity today (Esack, 2005). Evidence from the MI school indicated that it subscribed to an interpretation of Islam where critical examination of the faith was limited.

What needs to be understood here is how a Muslim's understanding of the Qur'an relates to the extent to which it can be studied critically. It also, to a lesser extent, needs to be considered how this coincides with, or diverges from, the mainstream contemporary UK Christian position, most importantly as held within the schools in the research. Therefore what is given here is a brief overview of the main positions.

In Part A the significance of the Qur'an for Muslims was discussed; here I want to draw out another important aspect of that significance, that of it being considered a totality. For the Muslim the Qur'an is the revealed word of God (Denffer, 1994) and, as such, many Muslims believe that it contains all things necessary, 'all requirements of the faith are revealed' (Bennett, 2005, p. 45). Some commentators would observe that the closest equivalent to the Qur'an in Christianity is not the Bible, but Jesus Christ himself (Ruthven, 2000). The Qur'an is therefore of immense importance for Muslims, being more than just a book, the

consequence of which is that in the view of some Muslims it cannot be discussed, analysed and critiqued in the same way as other texts (Esack, 2005).

The point at which possible critical engagement with the Qur'an was curtailed occurred in the ninth century AD (The Mu'tazilite Controversy) (Esack, 2005; Ruthven, 2000). Before this time debate was permissible, but the re-emergence of orthodoxy, which insisted upon the unquestioned acceptance of dogma and the notion of *bila kayfa*, meaning 'without further enquiry', closed down debate (Esack, 2005). This position has continued to be the dominant one in many Islamic societies, and among many Muslims, up to the present day, although some Muslim scholars, such as Esack and Akhtar, are beginning to challenge this orthodoxy.

Qur'anic interpretation, the discussion around the meaning of specific verses of the Qur'an (as opposed to examination of the truth claims of the faith), is also contested. Esack (2005) maintains that for most orthodox Muslims interpretation is not a personal engagement with the text, but is rather a matter of transmission of given interpretations. Understanding the 'exact intent' (Brown, 1996, p. 43) of the Qur'an, as illuminated by the Sunna<sup>356</sup>, involves instruction from 'traditional keepers of meaning' (Brown, 1996, p. 48) who themselves have been instructed by others before them. The Sunna's link to the prophetic word means that questioning the Sunna could call into question the revelation of the Qur'an and as such is considered dangerous (Esack, 2005). Some, however, consider that the Sunna is not so necessary, and the completeness of the Qur'an (Bennett, 2005) means that this, rather than the Sunna, becomes the key source of guidance. This in turn allows for individual interpretation, and thus multiple and contextual interpretations. More recently there has been an increasing emphasis on reinterpreting the Qur'an among many Muslim groups (particularly by young Muslims and those in the West), an indication that this is becoming an increasingly acceptable view.

Within mainstream contemporary UK Christianity critical examination of all aspects of the faith is permissible, as can be seen in the case of the theologian Don

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<sup>356</sup> For further debate around the relationship of the Sunna to the Qur'an in terms of revelation see Esack (2005) and Brown (1996).



Cupitt<sup>357</sup>, who remains an Anglican priest whilst holding extreme and controversial positions on the person of Jesus Christ. Whilst acknowledging that this has not always been the case within the mainstream UK denominations, and also that instances can still be found where debate has been closed down, nevertheless this is not a common occurrence, and generally debate and critical examination is supported.

The view that the Bible cannot be interpreted, and has a fixed meaning, is not found within mainstream Christian theology in Britain today, where Bible study is a part of the life of many churches and personal interpretation is encouraged<sup>358</sup>. At what could be regarded as a more intellectual or academic level, Biblical Criticism, which involves critical study of the sacred text, both for understanding, but also for authenticity, is a long-developed tradition in theological colleges, seminaries and theology faculties.

As discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, critical engagement with the Qur'an is limited within the MI school and it can now be seen that this can be related to a particular understanding of Islam. It will be recalled (Chapter 4.6.4) that the Islamic studies teacher in the MI school spoke about the way in which religious matters could not be discussed if there was any chance that the students might say something which questioned the faith. The limited extent of Qur'anic interpretation was reiterated in a conversation I had with the MI school Head in which he said that the Christian idea of biblical interpretation was not possible in the case of the Qur'an within Islam<sup>359</sup>. This makes the environment around critical discourse in the MI school significantly different from that of the other schools in the research, including the Christian schools, in which this critical engagement is permitted and where students are able to openly challenge all aspects of faith and belief. Thus, in areas related to religious belief, critical engagement was not only being fostered less effectively, but was being discouraged in the MI school. The consequence of

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<sup>357</sup> See, for example *Taking Leave of God* (Cupitt, 1980) and <http://www.doncupitt.com/doncupitt.html>

<sup>358</sup> Biblical criticism was formally restricted in the RC church after Pius X's '*Ne Temere*' decree in 1908 (Hastings, 1986), but was formally encouraged again in 1965 in the Vatican II constitution '*Dei Verbum*' (Flannery, 1975).

<sup>359</sup> Informal conversation with Head of MI school

this appeared to be a reduction in the development of critical thinking skills and lower levels of cognitive sophistication.

The negative effect on cognitive sophistication appears as an unintended consequence of the restriction on critical engagement with the faith. In subjects which were not directly related to religion, such as English, critical reasoning and other skills associated with increasing cognitive sophistication were being encouraged<sup>360</sup> by many of the teachers. However, the findings from the research suggest that the use of critical thinking in these areas did not sufficiently compensate for the restriction existing around religious beliefs.

A second difference between the MI and the RCI, RCS, NFI, and NFS schools also needs to be discussed, as this could possibly be an additional explanation for the less effective development of cognitive skills in the MI school. In an interview the Head of the MI school made reference to problems which arose from cultural differences over educational methods. The founder, the governing body and a number of staff came from countries, primarily in South Asia, in which the standard of pedagogy was very different from that encouraged in the English system. Education in these countries is often seen as being less child-centred and more didactic than English pedagogy, with its emphasis on reasoning and criticality (Hewitt, 1996; Saeed, 1996). This situation arose partly through the desire to employ Muslim teachers, but also due to financial constraints, and was a source of concern to the Head, who was trying to improve this aspect of the school through staff development. The problem of recruiting 'good', preferably Muslim, staff who are familiar with the English school system, within the limits imposed by the school's finances, is an issue facing many Muslim independent schools in the UK (Ansari, 2000; Rizvi, 2007).

I do not see the staff issue as the sole reason for the difference between the MI school and the other schools over the development of cognitive sophistication. The ECI school also had a high proportion of professionally unqualified staff, although they were more familiar with English pedagogy, and yet no difference in attitudes of tolerance towards those whose behaviour contravenes religious

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<sup>360</sup> Lesson observation (MI)

teaching was seen between these students and those in the RCI, RCS, NFI and NFS schools. This suggests that the untrained staff issue is not the only factor operating here, although clearly there is a need for more research in this area before this can be said with any degree of certainty. However, the lack of appropriately trained staff could have been exacerbating the situation, highlighting the need for more Muslim staff who are professionally trained and familiar with English pedagogy and teaching methods, something which has been noted by others working in the field of Muslim schools (Butt, 2002; Hower, 2001).

In the MI school, curtailment of the critical examination of the faith means that this cannot act as a route to increase the students' level of cognitive sophistication, as it can in the other schools in the research. This in itself is not necessarily a problem, but the question this raises for the MI school is how the school can effectively increase its students' levels of cognitive sophistication in other areas of the curriculum whilst still maintaining these restrictions.

The connection that I have suggested between the MI school students' lower tolerance towards beliefs which contravene religious teaching, and the school's lower effectiveness in developing the students' cognitive sophistication (due to restrictions around the extent to which the Qur'an can be critically examined) raises the question of whether this is likely to be found within other Muslim schools. As highlighted in Chapter 2.6.3, even faith schools associated with one faith or denomination can differ considerably, including in the way that the faith is portrayed to the students (for example see (Rizvi, 2007)). Therefore the extent to which this curtailment of the critical examination of the Qur'an would be found within other Muslim schools cannot be commented on with any certainty without further research. The discussion below indicates that this issue may not be solely related to the research school, but neither will it necessarily be found within all Muslim schools.

Some involved in Islamic education in the UK would consider a restriction on the critical examination of the faith to be an essential part of an Islamic education. Professor Syed Ali Ashraf (1988) highlights this absence of critical engagement as a fundamental aspect of Islamic education, suggesting that teaching about other religions is permissible and valuable (see also Muslim Council of Britain, 2007), but

that ‘the idea of critical openness which demands an “evaluation” even of values and assumptions of a religion is repugnant to Islam and the Muslims in so far as “religious education” classes are concerned’ (Ashraf, 1988, p. 77). For him an education system, such as the English system, which produces scepticism in its students is seen as destructive. He goes on to say that ‘knowledge must increase the range and depth of faith and not destroy it. That which destroys faith is not really knowledge, but a form of ignorance *jehl*’ (Ashraf, 1988, p. 74). This comment indicates a difference between the RCI school and some involved in Muslim education in the UK, including I suspect the MI school in this research. In the RCI school it was acknowledged that through encouraging the students to critically examine and engage with all aspects of the faith the students could lose or reject their faith<sup>361</sup>. However, this was a calculated risk, with the benefits for their faith which could ensue from this critical study seen as outweighing the possibility of rejecting the faith. This response can be seen to a lesser degree within the ECI and RCS schools.

As already discussed, the interpretation of Islam which sees the restriction of debate and critical examination of the faith as necessary within Muslim schools is not the only voice which exists, and this is at least becoming a contested area. Some Muslim scholars are beginning to challenge the effect that this curtailment of critical examination of the Qur’an has on Islam’s ability to cope with the challenges of the post-modern world (Esack, 2005), and some in the education field would subscribe to that position. This was illustrated to me at a recent conference on Muslim Education. One delegate did raise the possibility of including some degree of critical examination of some aspects of *shari’ah* within the curriculum, at which point a heated debate ensued around whether this was desirable or even possible.

The above discussion demonstrates that whilst the restriction of debate (leading to the less effective development of cognitive sophistication and thus lower tolerance of those who contravene Islamic religious teaching) may be found in other Muslim schools, this is not necessarily the case in all schools, which again emphasises the need for more research in this area.

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<sup>361</sup> Interview with Head of CT(RCI)

The issue discussed here is less about the Qur'an itself, but more about its critical examination, and this prohibition on critical examination of religious texts and doctrines is not confined to Islam. Contemporary mainstream Christianity in the UK does allow and engage in critical examination of the faith, but there are Christian denominations, some found within the UK, where this is restricted. The majority of these denominations, such as Old Order Amish and Mennonites, some Pentecostals, and Plymouth and Exclusive Brethren, subscribe to what can be termed a fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity, characterised by beliefs about the inerrancy of the Bible (Johnson-Weiner, 2007; Ruthven, 2004; Ruthven, 2007). The way that the critical examination of beliefs can be limited by such fundamentalist groups is clearly demonstrated in Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady's documentary film about a fundamentalist Evangelical youth summer camp in the USA, 'Jesus Camp'<sup>362</sup>. Old Order Amish and Mennonite education too can be seen to emphasise obedience to the *Ordnung*<sup>363</sup> and limit any form of questioning which goes beyond clarification (Harroff, 2004; Johnson-Weiner, 2007). But as is illustrated by the ECI school, where the faith group associated with the school does have a certain element of scriptural inerrancy amongst its beliefs, this need not necessarily imply a curtailment of the critical examination of the faith.

A few denominations, such as the Exclusive Brethren, where this restriction on critical engagement with the faith does apply, are involved in education in the UK (MacEoin, 2009). However, immigration, particularly from Africa, is changing the landscape of UK Christianity. Rather than migrants joining an existing congregation which is part of one of the established mainstream UK denominations, an increasing number of churches are emerging which serve specific immigrant groups. Many of these new churches have a Pentecostalist background which restricts debate and critical examination of the faith (Gifford, 2007). At present very few of these groups have begun to establish schools, but this may change in the future and thus the same issue over the development of cognitive skills and the resulting tolerance outcome may also occur in Christian schools. The focus of this research

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<sup>362</sup> 'Jesus Camp' Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady, 2007, ICA Films, UK

<sup>363</sup> The community code of conduct which reflects the beliefs of the community and controls most aspects of Old Order life (Johnson-Weiner, 2007)

has been on Christianity and Islam, but the same restrictions can also be found in some Orthodox Jewish communities (Ruthven, 2004). The potential for a school to ineffectively develop the students' cognitive sophistication can therefore be seen to exist in schools operated by denominations of other faiths where there is a restriction on critical examination of the faith.

#### **8.3.3.b Hypothesis IV**

The discussion will now consider the final hypothesis, Hypothesis IV. This is also confirmed, but again the ill-defined object of tolerance needs to be modified. The only time that specific reference was made to non-Muslims and 'non-proper' Muslims was when lower tolerance was directed towards those who contravened (Islamic) religious teachings, and thus this is the only situation in which this can be seen to apply. The similarity of the RCI, RCS, ECI, NFI and NFS responses towards this group has already been discussed in relation to Hypothesis III

The implication of the finding in the case of the contravention of religious beliefs is that the formation of the religious identity in the MI school is in some way different from the formation of the religious identity in the other faith schools. Although what is meant by the formation of the religious identity could be interpreted in various ways, within this hypothesis it referred to the extent to which other expressions of the faith were allowed, and multiple identities and autonomy encouraged. This understanding was derived through Social Identity Theory, and it is to this that we will return to offer a possible explanation for the impact of the school.

The MI school differs from the other schools in this research in its perception of its status and position within wider British society. Clear status differences can be distinguished between Islam and Christianity in the UK, the former being a minority faith, the latter being established and the faith with which the majority of the population identify (ONS, 2004). The secular discourses evident within British society have led some practising Christians, including the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey, to perceive themselves as members of a persecuted minority (Not Ashamed, 2010). But this view is not prevalent amongst UK Christians, and representatives of the main Christian denominations are still

prominent within British public life. Thus a clear difference in status between Christianity and Islam can be seen. But Social Identity Theory would see that a more important factor to consider in respect of tolerance is the difference in the perception of *threat*<sup>364</sup> to the religious identity and status held by the various schools, in particular by the leadership of these schools (Herriot, 2007; Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

As was discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 the perception of threat within the Muslim school was far greater than in the other schools. Within the RCI, RCS and ECI schools threats were fairly abstract, relating broadly to secularism, and rarely indicating a well-defined out-group. In these schools the threat was also generally only perceived by the school Head, with only one student referring to any threat<sup>365</sup>. This contrasted with the MI school where both staff and students made reference to threats, which related to the influence of majority culture, secularism and, more importantly in the student responses, to Islamophobia. All the threats mentioned are consistent with wider discourses around the place and nature of Islam in the UK (Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia et al., 2004; Driel, 2004) and are thus likely to be seen within other Muslim schools. These threats could be loosely termed external in that they originate from outside Islam.

An internal threat could also be detected within the school. This threat related to differences within Islam which encompassed theological differences, but were also related to cultural differences. These threats were less explicitly referred to — almost solely recounted by the Head — and related to the position and image of the school and, by implication, the standing of the founder and others associated with the school in the local Muslim community. It was particularly important that the school was seen as producing ‘good Muslims’ as demonstrated by their conduct, expressed through the students’ manners, dress, and strict gender segregation. Certain aspects of this notion of ‘the good Muslim’ were seen by the Head to be influenced by particular cultural understandings reflecting the founder’s

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<sup>364</sup> The use of the terms ‘perception’ and ‘perceived threat’ does not imply any judgement on whether these threats are real; the important aspect of this discussion is whether the group themselves felt that this was the case — not whether it was the ‘true’ situation.

<sup>365</sup> Nick(ECI)

and the Mosque's cultural background. The school as a reflection of the founder's vision is noted as a common feature of Muslim (Lawson, 2005), which suggests that the influence of internal threats is also likely to apply in the case of other Muslim schools.

Internal disputes and positioning are part of any organisation, and religions are no exception. Therefore these internal threats can be seen as reflecting wider debates within and amongst UK Muslim communities about the leadership and nature of Islam in Britain (McLoughlin, 2006). In the early years of Muslim immigration to Britain the small numbers of Muslims and the limited availability of mosques meant that sectarian differences were ignored. This changed as the number of Muslims increased, and now in some areas there are a multiplicity of mosques, each catering for a different ethnic community or interpretation of Islam (Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Lewis, 2002; Raza, 1991). McLoughlin (2006) notes the way that, in Britain, Muslim community leaders have drawn upon their cultural capital, which is often associated with some form of cultural lineage, to establish their authority within their local community. Although he sees that this is beginning to change as the number of British-born Muslims increases, nevertheless he sees that this traditional leadership has used the "resources" of Islamic tradition' selectively to 'maintain ethnic boundaries, legitimate the authority of South Asian cultural "norms" and reinforce conservative adaption strategies' (ibid, p. 59), a point which is reflected in the MI school Head's comments above.

Returning to the reaction to the threat, Social Identity Theory (Chapter 2.3.7) posits that groups who perceive a threat to their identity and status react to improve or maintain that status (Herriot, 2007; Tajfel and Turner, 1986). One typical response to such a threat is for the in-group to increase its distinction and difference in relation to the relevant out-group (Herriot, 2007). Uniform behaviour and more consistent applications of the rules are required of group members. The school's way of achieving this is to increase the emphasis on the Islamic aspect of the school, as this is what makes it distinctive and different from the wider society. The Head in his interview spoke about the governing body wanting to increase the



Islamic content of the school day<sup>366</sup>. Other identities are downplayed and certainly the MI school, in comparison with the others, placed the least emphasis on extra-curricular activities.

Whilst the school's emphasis on Islam can distinguish it from wider British society, it does not distinguish it from other groups within Islam which are perceived as posing a threat. In order to differentiate itself from these other, Islamic, out-groups the school now focuses on emphasising a particular interpretation of Islam, one which is considered to be the 'True Islam' (Herriot, 2007). Issues such as the honour of the community become important. Dress and behaviour too can be seen to be reflections of this difference, as has been discussed.

Thus within the MI school not only is the emphasis on the formation of religious identity increased, but also what that identity is about becomes more narrowly defined, with the boundaries of that identity becoming stronger. In-group bonding increases and those who do not comply with the rules, particularly those who are members of the faith but who dissent from aspects of orthodox doctrine, are especially disapproved of. Reactions to these 'non-proper' Muslims can be particularly hostile. In addition the importance placed on the honour of the community, which is part of the identity, means that even associating with someone who is engaging in prohibited behaviour is potentially damaging to the image of the community.

No indication was given by any of the other faith schools in this research, the RCI, RCS and ECI schools, that they felt their faith group was being threatened in any significant way. Although clearly there are threats associated with these schools, both external and internal, nevertheless their sense of threat is very low in comparison with that felt in the MI school. The lower sense of threat means that the boundaries around what constitutes the faith, and by extension the formation of the faith, do not have to be so closely controlled. The in-group bonding is lower and wider, and more varied expressions of faith can therefore be accommodated, and other non-religious identities can be encouraged.

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<sup>366</sup> Head Teacher(MI)

The extent to which, and the way in which, the MI school acts to reinforce and form a Muslim identity can be seen to some extent to be dependent upon the level of threat that the school perceives that Islam is subjected to and as such could be seen to be unique to that school. A change in the perception of the threat would therefore potentially mean a change in how the Islamic identity is promoted within the school. This means that this aspect of the school can, and will, change. A particular incident either at the local, UK or global level which affects the Muslim community could increase the perceived threat to the faith community and thus change the intensity of identity formation, which in turn would have repercussions for tolerance. The contextual nature of the perception of threat also means that it is difficult to speculate on how this might translate to other Muslim schools, but, as will be discussed below, it could mean that lower tolerance would be found in liberal, as well as more conservative, Muslim schools.

The influence of a perceived external threat on tolerance in the MI school implicates external policies and the wider societal context in this particular tolerance outcome. As discussed, the external threat was seen to arise from negative attitudes towards Islam which relate to Islamophobic discourses within society, particularly in the media, but also from government strategies, such as the 'Prevent' strategy (Home Office, 2008b) which explicitly targets the 'Muslim community' and thus exacerbates the perception of threat throughout Muslim communities in the UK. This therefore is not solely a 'Muslim issue', but one in which British society as a whole is involved to some extent.

#### **8.3.4 An Historical Parallel?**

Hypotheses III and IV suggest that the MI school impacts on the students' attitudes of tolerance towards those who contravene Islamic teachings in two ways: the first through less efficient development of cognitive sophistication, which was related to curtailment of any critical examination of the faith, and the second through the formation of a religious identity, which is partially dependent on the perceived threat to the group identity.

In the above discussion I have suggested that both of these school aspects can be seen to be related to Islam, but I think that it would be inappropriate, and

unwise, to label this a 'Muslim problem'. Earlier in this chapter I made the point that the curtailment of any critical examination of the faith was not restricted to Islam. I think that a potentially important, and enlightening, historical parallel to make is to compare Islam and Muslim schools today with the Roman Catholic Church and education in England in the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Hurst (2000) has already made an historical comparison between these two faith groups, in the area of student needs and the funding of their schools, but there is still scope for more research.

Clearly no comparable tolerance data exists, but both the school aspects which are seen to impact on tolerance in the MI school in this research can be seen historically to have existed in Roman Catholic schools. First a deep distrust of the Roman Catholic Church and their educational aims existed in many sectors of British society. Although the majority of restrictions placed on Roman Catholics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been removed by the 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act (Tenbus, 2010), nevertheless a sense of threat and persecution remained, which was felt by Roman Catholics well into the twentieth century (Hastings, 1986). Furthermore, as discussed in the introduction to the RCI school in Chapter 4.3, Pius X's '*Ne Temere*' decree in 1908 formalised the restrictions regarding critical examination of the faith. However, it should be noted that this decree only formalised what was normal practice for most Catholics, in the light of challenges which were being made to that practice (ibid). Thus, although only briefly outlined here, the parallels between the historical situation of the Roman Catholic Church and that of Islam and Muslims today can be clearly seen. I feel that this parallel serves to underline my point that this is a complex area, and that the findings in this research cannot just be associated with Islam.

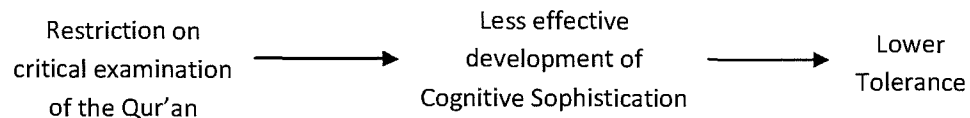
### **8.3.5 Two Models of how the Muslim Independent School could be Impacting on its Students' Attitudes of Tolerance,**

This thesis has suggested that in the MI school two school aspects impacted on students' attitudes of tolerance towards those whose behaviour contravened Islamic teaching. These findings relate only to the MI school and cannot with any confidence be generalised beyond that. Nevertheless, as both school aspects share

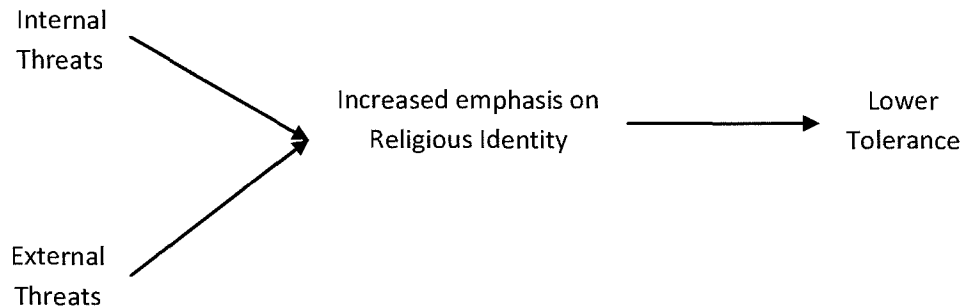
the same outcome variable the question can be raised as to whether either of the two aspects is sufficient on its own to instigate the outcome, or whether it is a combination or interaction effect that is being witnessed. This issue of concomitant variation, in which more than one feature, in this case school aspect, gives rise to the same outcome variable, is an acknowledged problem with comparative studies with a small sample size (Lijphart, 1971; Ragin and Zaret, 1983). Without further research it is not possible to confirm with any certainty which of the possibilities is more likely, as the sample does not include schools which encompass a variety of combinations of differing levels of group identity formation and levels of cognitive skills. But it is possible to consider the two models which emerge and these can form the basis of further research (Chapter 9.5).

In Model 1, the Separate Pathways Model, the two paths act independently, with either being sufficient to produce the difference in tolerance outcome noted in the findings. The first path is the restriction on critical examination of the Qur'an. This restriction means that the school does not effectively develop critical thinking skills and cognitive sophistication in its students. This leads to the students being less able to assess and cope with alternative views, which can result in lower tolerance. In the second path the perceived internal and external threats to the faith group's identity and status result in an increase in, and narrowing of, the teaching about the faith. This results in an increase in the students' identification with the faith, and in particular heightens the students' sense of difference and distinctiveness from the out-group, which SIT sees as leading to a lowering of tolerance.

### Model 1: The Separate Pathways Model



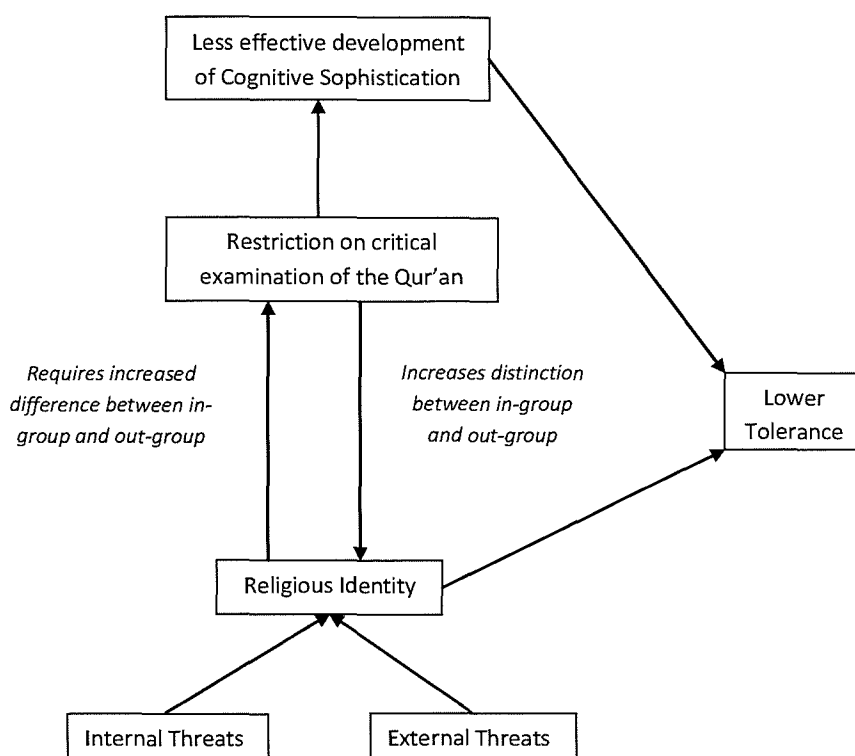
(The Cognitive Sophistication Path)



(The Religious Identity Path)

In Model 2, The Interaction Model, there is an interaction between the religious identity path and the cognitive sophistication path. As in Model 1 the linear effect of increased threat on the religious identity is maintained, so an increase in perceived threat increases the emphasis that the school puts on religious identity formation with the result being lower tolerance. But in addition the perceived threat to the religious identity increases the need to subscribe to the orthodox position regarding the restriction of the critical examination of the Qur'an, meaning that this is more strictly applied. The consequence of this is that the development of cognitive sophistication is impaired, again leading to lower tolerance. Finally a dynamic is established between restriction on the critical examination of the Qur'an and the religious identity. As well as the religious identity increasing the extent to which the orthodox position is held, the religious identity can be seen to be enhanced by the increased sense of distinctiveness generated by the emphasis on the orthodox position on the restriction of critical examination of the Qur'an.

## Model 2: The Interaction Model



At this stage these two models are only hypotheses generated from the research, and more research is required in the whole area of the effect of Muslim schools on cognitive sophistication before any of these conclusions or suggestions can be addressed with any certainty. But before moving on to the final conclusion it is possible to speculate on which type of schools would show what outcomes in the case of each of the models. The following brief discussion includes schools of faiths other than Islam, but only applies in the first instance to the English context due to the particular circumstances around Islam in the UK which may not be the same in other countries.

Based on the separate pathways model, if the cognitive sophistication pathway was sufficient to lower tolerance then it would be expected that students in faith schools (not just Muslim schools) in which critical examination of the faith was restricted would show lower levels of cognitive sophistication and lower tolerance towards those whose behaviour contravened religious teaching than students in schools where the critical examination of the faith was not restricted.

Furthermore, if the religious identity pathway was sufficient to lower tolerance then it would be expected that lower tolerance would be seen in a range of Muslim schools, not just those in which critical examination of the faith was restricted. The factor which would differentiate one Muslim school from another would be the degree of threat to the religious identity that those involved with the schools perceived. In theory this could occur in the case of any Muslim school, as it is not related to the interpretation of Islam to which they subscribe. It would not be expected that lower tolerance would be found in Christian faith schools in England, although this might occur if a perceived threat to a particular denomination emerged.

If the lower tolerance was a result of an interaction effect (as in the second model) then it would be expected that lower tolerance would only occur in schools which combined a restriction on the critical examination of the faith with a perception of threat to their religious identity. In the English context, therefore, this would most likely only occur in Muslim, not Christian, schools.

#### **8.4. Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the research. It has highlighted the main differences in tolerance between the schools, and has discussed these in the light of other research and wider discourses. This wider discussion has enabled some very tentative conclusions to be drawn.

The next and final chapter will commence with a summary of the findings and conclusions from this chapter. This will then proceed to a discussion of the limitations of the research before considering the impact of these findings and highlighting areas for future research.

## **Chapter 9: Summary and Concluding Remarks**

### **9.1 Introduction**

This thesis has asked the question, and entered into the debate, about the effect of faith schools on their students' attitudes of tolerance and I see this research as having provided some much-needed empirical evidence which will enable that debate to be taken further. The debate over faith schools and their ability to promote tolerance has become increasingly vociferous and pertinent since the late 1990s, and particularly since the events of 2001 and the introduction of the Community Cohesion agenda in 2007 (DCSF, 2007b). In the light of these factors this research can be seen to have made a significant, and much-needed, contribution to understanding the effect of faith schools on their students' attitudes of tolerance.

The research has highlighted the complex nature of the effect that faith schools have on their students' attitudes of tolerance, suggesting that any negative effects observed in a few faith schools are unlikely to be general to all faith schools. It has also begun to narrow the research focus by increasing our understanding regarding where, and in what contexts, problems might arise in faith schools over tolerance.

This chapter will begin by summarising the main research findings. It will then discuss the limitations of this research before considering its impact and highlighting the major areas for future investigation which have emerged.

### **9.2 The Main Research Findings**

Three main research findings have emerged from this study.

The first is that there was no evidence to support the claim that faith schools, as a group, were detrimental to their students' tolerance of diversity. Nor was there any evidence that the attitudes of tolerance held by students in faith schools, when considered as a group, were different from their counterparts in non-faith schools. In general the students in all the schools were tolerant towards a range of different groups. Variations in attitudes existed within the schools, but



these were found to be the result of differences in the students' background characteristics. However, inter-school differences were found.

In all the faith schools and also in the NFI school the findings showed that the students were less tolerant of members of a (different) religious group, than they were of other groups in society (immigrants and those on the margins of society), but this was only seen in the case of active tolerance (the mode of tolerance which was about an openness towards others). The schools were seen to be providing an insufficient amount of contact with the Religious Other. In the faith schools this was a result of the schools providing little knowledge about other faiths. In addition, it was the case that none of the schools were providing a deep enough form of contact to enable the students to emotionally engage with and understand the significance of religion in the life of someone of another faith. Within the faith schools this failure arose from the desire of these schools to nurture their students in their own faith. In the non-faith schools it was suggested that the influence of secular humanism, underpinning English education policy, was reinforcing the discourses of secularism and multiculturalism within a wider society in which faith was confined to the private sphere. As a consequence of these aspects of the schools their students felt less willing or able to engage with the Religious Other.

The final main finding was that the MI school students showed lower tolerance towards those whose behaviour contravened Islamic religious teachings. It is perhaps prudent to re-emphasise that the finding related to this particular Muslim school and cannot be generalised to the whole population of Muslim schools in England. The school was seen to impact on this attitude of tolerance in two ways. The first way was through less effective development of cognitive sophistication, linked to the restriction on critical engagement with the Qur'an, which may have been exacerbated by issues with staffing and teaching, such as the use of didactic rather than child-centred pedagogy. The second way was through the formation of the religious identity. The religious identity was seen to be influenced by perceived external and internal threats to the Muslim community associated with the school. The research highlighted that many of these external threats were related to Islamophobia. In consequence, it was suggested that by

increasing the sense of perceived threat, external factors, such as government targeted interventions to tackle Islamic extremism and the negative portrayal of Islam in the media, were contributing to this lower attitude of tolerance. As such this attitude was not solely related to an internal religious aspect of the school.

Two possible models of how these two aspects of the school (less effective cognitive development and the formation of the religious identity) might operate were also suggested. In the first model the two aspects work independently. In the second there is an interaction between the two aspects in which the perception of threat to the religious identity increases the strength of the religious identity, which in turn leads to an increased restriction on the critical examination of the Qur'an. Furthermore, this leads to the school less effectively developing the students' level of cognitive sophistication. An increased restriction on the critical examination of the Qur'an also increases the strength of the religious identity and a dynamic is set up between these two elements (see Chapter 8.3.5).

### **9.3 Limitations**

As has been stated at various points in this thesis (for example Chapter 3) this is an exploratory study. The sampling mode employed has meant that the findings and any conclusions drawn from this research only apply to the particular schools which participated in the research, and thus cannot be considered, with any confidence, to apply to the whole range of faith schools (Maxwell, 2002). Nevertheless tentative suggestions have been made which may be applicable in other similar situations, and these form the basis of the questions and embryonic hypotheses which need to be explored further in future research.

By using a mixed methods approach and collecting data from a variety of sources, this research has tried to build up a detailed picture of each school, in order that the aspects of the school which might impact on tolerance could be isolated. Moreover triangulating the data in this way, and the limited use of 'member checking' (Robson, 2002), the process whereby the data and the analysis of that data are returned to the respondents for their comments, did mean that it was possible to have some sense of whether what was being observed was an isolated incident or was more representative of the school (Maxwell, 2002).

Nevertheless, this research can still only present a snapshot in time, and it must also be recognised that schools can, and do, change.

Within this research the main unit of comparison has been the school and, as such, responses have been aggregated to produce a school response. It must, however, be acknowledged that within all the schools there were a variety of responses and understandings. During the analysis I have tried to show variations in the responses within a school where they occurred.

Having considered the limitations of this research the discussion will now turn to its impact and then highlight the areas where further research is needed.

#### **9.4 The Impact**

As was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, despite frequent and extensive media coverage of the debate about faith schools and their impact on their students' attitudes of tolerance, there is a dearth of empirical research in this area (Grace, 2003). Furthermore the necessity for research in this area appears to be increasing as the religious landscape of the UK changes, and as religion re-emerges as an important aspect of global politics. This research can be seen to have made a significant and timely contribution to that debate in that it is an in-depth empirical study into the effect of faith schools on their students' attitudes of tolerance. It has not focused solely on one understanding of tolerance, or one object of tolerance, or one faith group, but has incorporated a variety of these and so has enabled a broad understanding of this issue in the selected schools. It has also been able to highlight aspects of the schools which impact on their students' attitudes of tolerance. The insights gained from this research can be developed by the schools themselves or incorporated into a wider education policy to improve the promotion of tolerance within schools (Everett, 2011).

In addition to the general way that this research can be used to inform practice within schools it can be considered to have also advanced scholarship and contributed to the body of literature in three areas which will now be discussed.

This research has advanced scholarship into faith schools and tolerance by providing empirical research into the effects of faith schools on their students' attitudes of tolerance. It has indicated that the impact of many faith schools is no

different from that of non-faith schools. But more importantly this research was able to assess which aspects of faith schools appeared to be negatively impacting on the students' attitudes. In doing so it highlighted three aspects of faith schools which are potentially problematic for tolerance: the development of higher levels of cognitive sophistication in their students, the formation of the religious identity, and contact. The research has also indicated which objects of tolerance were most problematic: those people whose behaviour contravened religious teachings and, in the case of active tolerance, the Religious Other. Although the findings in this research cannot be generalised to the wider population of faith schools with any level of confidence, through highlighting aspects of the school and objects of tolerance which were problematic in the research schools, the findings have indicated where further research in this area needs to be focused.

This research has also contributed to the body of literature around the effect of inter-group contact within schools on student attitudes. In this case the group in question was the Religious Other. This could be understood as a religious group other than the student's own or, if the students were not religious, of a person who was religious. The research found that the students in faith and non-faith schools were less tolerant towards the Religious Other than they were towards other groups such as immigrants and those on the margins of society. The research suggested that this difference was related to the lower quality of contact on the basis of faith compared with that which occurred in the case of some other groups within the school. This research adds to the growing body of research which questions the notion that mixing, on its own, is sufficient to generate positive attitudes towards other groups in society (Janmaat, 2010). Like other studies in this area (for example Donnelly and Hughes, 2006; Yablon, 2011), this research would want to stress the importance of the nature of that contact.

The final contribution that this research makes is methodological. The approach taken in this research has differed from tolerance research generally, and in particular from tolerance research in relation to faith schools and religious groups, and in doing so it has raised some important methodological points.

In this research any significant differences between schools in their students' attitudes of tolerance emerged from the qualitative data. Once

background characteristics had been controlled for the questionnaire data showed no differences between the schools. But insights about tolerance in this research were gained from the qualitative data and these insights could be used to inform the development of new quantitative indicators for measuring tolerance. The two main insights are now discussed.

The first insight gained from this research was the use of different modes of tolerance, active and passive. The research also showed that different skills were needed to engage in active tolerance from those required for passive tolerance. In the research little variation in attitude was found when tolerance was considered in the passive mode. This mode of tolerance was connected to the application of human rights, a response which was almost universally given by the students. The significant differences were seen mainly when active tolerance was considered, which required students to engage with the Other. This mode of tolerance, as discussed in Chapter 2, is closer to the understanding of tolerance within the Community Cohesion agenda. Therefore this research would seem to indicate that if research is being designed to look at tolerance as an aspect of Community Cohesion then the questions which would be most indicative would be those which explored active rather than passive tolerance. This is not to suggest that questions which are based on the application of human rights do not indicate tolerance, merely that this passive mode of tolerance is less pertinent to Community Cohesion than active tolerance.

The second methodological insight is concerned with the object of tolerance, where the students who are the subjects of the research into tolerance are categorised on the grounds of faith. In much tolerance research which uses quantitative techniques, such as cross-national studies of civic attitudes, the objects of tolerance are specified groups, for example in the 1999 IEA Civic Education Study (Torney-Purta, 2001) the focus was on immigrants. The findings from this research showed no significant variation in tolerance when the object of tolerance was a specific group. Instead the differences occurred when the objects of tolerance were opinions, views and behaviours which differed from the students' own religious beliefs and teachings. I would like to suggest that questions which incorporate this understanding of diversity would be a valuable addition to

quantitative studies into tolerance, particularly if the faith of the students is a factor of interest. Framing questionnaire items which can explore this type of tolerance, whereby the object of tolerance is not fixed or universal, and is specific to the person or faith group, is more problematic than devising questions which focus on a specific group. Some tolerance research has introduced a self-reporting element in which respondents are asked to nominate a group that they are uncomfortable with, or dislike, and the subsequent tolerance questions relate to that specific group (see for example Malone, 1997). Whether this could be used effectively in a school situation would require more consideration and rigorous testing. However, my feeling is that this might be an important idea to pursue, as understandings gained in this area are likely to lead to the development of effective strategies which can improve inter-faith relations.

This section has discussed the three important implications of this study for tolerance research and the field of tolerance education. The final section will now consider the areas which the research has highlighted in which there remain unanswered questions relevant to the interaction of religion and education in British society today.

## **9.5 Further Research**

This research has raised a number of questions, but two particular areas stand out as being in need of further research.

The first area focuses on the need for a greater understanding of active tolerance as related to the Religious Other, and in particular the role of the school in this. The overarching question that this raises is:

How are schools involved in the formation of their students' attitudes of tolerance towards the Religious Other?

Questions that might be addressed within this include:

- How do schools approach (discuss, teach about) the Religious Other?
- How does the way the school approaches the Religious Other differ from the way other groups in society are approached?

- Can these approaches be classified in any way? Leading on from that, is there any consistency about why a school adopts a certain approach, and what is the effect of the approach on the students' tolerance response?

The second area focuses on Muslim schools. The findings from the research suggested that the MI school students were less tolerant of those whose behaviour contravened Islamic religious teachings and that this was related to the formation of the religious identity and to the less effective development of cognitive sophistication. Two models of how these two aspects of the school may operate were also suggested: one which saw the two aspects impacting separately, and the other which posited an interaction effect (Chapter 8.3.5). The discussion around the two models included speculation regarding what school outcomes would be expected in each case and therefore one possible area of research would be to test the two models.

However, in addition the research highlighted the need to make a more detailed study into the two school aspects (cognitive sophistication and religious identity formation) suggesting two broader sets of research questions that could be explored.

The first of these would involve a more detailed study into differences in levels of cognitive sophistication amongst students, particularly in faith schools, and the link to tolerance. The models and the findings were solely based on one school. Other studies into faith schools, including ones looking at Muslim schools, have shown them to encompass a variety of understandings of purpose and to operate in a variety of ways, therefore research looking at a wider range of Muslim schools is needed. The questions that are raised here include:

- Does the level of cognitive sophistication of students in Muslim schools differ from that found in other faith schools and non-faith schools in England? If so, in what ways does it differ?
- Are differences in cognitive sophistication sufficient to lead to differences in tolerance towards those whose behaviour contravenes religious beliefs? What other factors are necessary? (i.e. is there an interaction effect?)

- What aspects of the schools contribute (negatively and positively) to the way that their students' cognitive skills are developed? Here the research can explore the extent to which any effect is based on a faith aspect of the school or whether it is more related to the quality of teaching and differences in pedagogy.

The second aspect would focus more on understanding the possible link that the research highlighted between some interpretations of Islam and the ability of the school to develop its students' levels of cognitive sophistication. In the case studied, this apparently led to the students showing lower tolerance towards those whose behaviour contravened Islamic teachings.

A question raised by the research is whether this effect is related to Islam, or at least particular interpretations of Islam, or whether it is related to any other aspect of the school. This part of the question is similar to the research questions above.

A second question is whether this is solely related to particular interpretations of Islam or whether it is connected to the nature of the belief; for example, is the same effect noted in other schools run by faiths where they hold views which similarly restrict the critical examination of the faith (e.g. Old Order Amish, Exclusive Brethren)? The research questions given above in respect of Muslim schools could be modified so that they encompassed a range of faith schools where the range was chosen to reflect differences in the nature of the belief in those schools.



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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: The Student Questionnaire**

**Faith Schools and Diversity**  
**MPhil/PhD research conducted by Helen Everett**

September 2009

Dear Student

For my PhD I am conducting research into the views of students at different types of faith schools. As part of that research I would really like to hear what you think and believe about various things. In the questions that follow I would really like your honest personal opinion- whatever that is.

The replies that you make will be treated strictly confidentially. No attempt will be made to identify individual students. So, please do not sign your name anywhere. I will not be showing your replies to any of your teachers- or indeed to anyone else.

I am most grateful for your co-operation and thank you for participating in this questionnaire.

Yours Sincerely

Helen Everett  
heverett@ioe.ac.uk

University of London, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1 0AL

### Section A: General Views

In this section we want to know your views on many different issues.

*For each question in this section indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking the appropriate box.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A1 Women should run for public office and take part in the government just as men do.					
A2 Any religious groups should be allowed to set up a place of worship.					
A3 People who are homosexual (gay or lesbian) should not be allowed to hold office in local or national government					
A4 Religious/faith groups should be able to say what they believe and think even if it is offensive to or may upset other groups in society.					
A5 Firms and businesses should be made to make arrangements for physically disabled people such as providing disabled toilets and access.					
A6 Members of all ethnic/racial groups should be encouraged to run in elections for political office					
A7 A student, whether they are from a well off or poor household, should have an equal chance to go to university or into higher education.					
A8 When jobs are scarce men should have more right to a job than women.					
A9 Homosexual (gay and lesbian) rights groups should be allowed to hold public non violent marches and rallies to promote their homosexual rights.					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A10 All ethnic/racial groups should have equal chances to get a good education in this country					
A11 Only rich/wealthy people should be able to hold office in local or national government.					
A12 A physically disabled person should be able to run for public office and take part in the government just as able bodied people do					
A13 All ethnic/racial groups should have equal chances to get good jobs in this country.					

A14 The questions above asked about 6 different groups of people.

Look at the list below and circle the group you like the **least** or feel most uncomfortable with.

- People with disabilities
- People of a different ethnic/racial group
- People of a different religious group
- People of a different gender
- People with a different sexual orientation (eg people who are gay, lesbian or transsexual)
- People from a different social class (eg people who are much richer or poorer than you)

## Section B: Views on Religion

In this section we want to know your views on various aspects of religion.

### Part 1:

*For each question below indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking the appropriate box.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
B1.1 One good thing about the UK is that there are many different churches and religious traditions/faiths.					
B1.2 It is important for all religious believers to try to learn more about the other faiths in the UK today.					
B1.3 Pupils should not be allowed time off school to attend their religious festivals (eg Eid, Divali.)					
B1.4 It is good when different religious opinions and issues are debated and discussed openly.					
B1.5 People of all faiths should be allowed to keep their own customs and lifestyles including dress.					
B1.6 In a mainly non Christian area it is offensive to display Christmas decorations					
B1.7 The government should encourage people of all faiths to practice their own religion					
B1.8 Faith Schools should teach about all faiths, not just their own.					
B1.9 If someone I knew invited me to their place of worship to see a special ceremony or celebration I would have no hesitation about going.					

Would you say you had a religious belief?  
 If **Yes** – please answer the following questions (Part 2)  
 If **No**- please go straight to Section C on the next page

**Part 2:**

*For each question below indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking the appropriate box.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
B2.1 I would only consider marrying someone from my own faith					
B2.2 Only people who believe in God can be good.					
B2.3 There are many different religions but no one absolute true religion.					
B2.4 I would like the religious group to which I belong to hold joint services with other religions.					
B2.5 My faith is important to me					
B2.6 My faith is the most important part of me					

## Section C: Your Friends and the People Around You

C1 Do you have boys or girls from a different ethnic or racial group among your best friends? *(Tick one box only)*

No ☐

Yes ☐

C2 Do you have boys or girls from a different religious group among your best friends? *(Tick one box only)*

No ☐

Yes ☐

C3 Would you want to do things together with youngsters of a different race or ethnic group? (go out, go shopping, play football, chat, etc) *(Tick one box only)*

No, never ☐

I'd rather not ☐

Yes, I don't mind ☐

Yes, very much so ☐

C4 Would you want to do things together with youngsters of a different religious group? *(Tick one box only)*

No, never ☐

I'd rather not ☐

Yes, I don't mind ☐

Yes, very much so ☐



How much would you say you can trust the following people?

*Tick the box which best describes how you feel*

	Not at all	Only a little	Some	A lot	Does not matter to me
C5 Someone of a different ethnic or racial group					
C6 Someone of a different religious group					
C7 Someone of the same ethnic or racial group					
C8 Someone of the same religious group					

There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in the UK. (By "immigrants" we mean people who came to settle in the UK)

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

*Tick the box which best describes how you feel*

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Don't know
C9 Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in the UK.						
C10 Immigrants are generally good for the UK's economy						
C11 Immigrants increase crime rates.						
C12 Immigrants make the UK more open to new ideas and cultures.						

## Section D: Your School

In this section we want to know your views on various aspects of your school.

### Part 1: The School Curriculum

In this section we would like to know what you have learned in school.

*For each question indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking the appropriate box.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Agree	Strongly agree
D1.1 In school I have learned to understand people who have different ideas					
D1.2 In school I have learned to understand people who have different religious beliefs					
D1.3 In school I have learned to contribute to solving problems in the community					
D1.4 In school I have learned to be concerned about what happens in other countries					
D1.5 I feel this school is preparing me well for life in a multicultural society					
D1.6 The way I'm urged to act and think in school is different from the way I really feel					

## Part 2: In the Classroom

When answering these questions think especially about classes in history, citizenship, PSHE and religious education

*For each question in this section indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking the appropriate box.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
D2.1 Students feel free to disagree openly with their teachers about political and social issues during class					
D2.2 Students feel free to disagree openly with their teachers about religious issues during class.					
D2.3 Students are encouraged to make up their own minds about issues					
D2.4 Teachers respect our opinions and encourage us to express them during class					
D2.5 Students feel free to express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from most of the other students					
D2.6 Teachers encourage us to discuss political or social issues about which people have different opinions					
D2.7 Teachers encourage us to discuss religious issues about which people have different opinions					
D2.8 Teachers present several sides of an issue when explaining it in class					

## Section E: About You

In this section we want to know some details about you. Please fill answers as directed

E1 Age:.....

E2 Sex:.....

E3 Date of birth:.....

E4 Where were you born?

UK ☐

Elsewhere, namely .....

E5 Where was your mother born?

UK ☐

Elsewhere, namely .....

E6 Where was your father born?

UK ☐

Elsewhere, namely .....

E7 How often do you speak English at home?

Never ☐

Sometimes ☐

Always ☐

E8 Which best describes you? (*tick one box only*)

White ☐

Black Caribbean ☐

Black African ☐

Black other ☐

Indian ☐

Pakistani ☐

Chinese ☐

Bangladeshi ☐

Other.....

Are you religious?

No- please go to question E13

Yes- please answer the questions below

E9 What is your religion? (*Tick one box only*)

- |           |   |                          |
|-----------|---|--------------------------|
| Christian | Church of England                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|           | Roman Catholic                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|           | Baptist                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|           | Methodist                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|           | Other Christian <i>please specify</i> ..... |                          |
| Buddhist  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hindu     |   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jewish    |   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Muslim    |   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sikh      |   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|           | Other <i>please specify</i> .....           |                          |

E10 On average how often do you attend services or prayer meetings or attend a place of worship? (*Tick one box only*)

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Never   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Major festivals only                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Once a month  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Twice a month   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Every week  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rarely, but worship in my own home at least once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> |

E11 Do your parents attend the same place of worship as you? (*Tick all that apply*)

- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes my mother attends | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Yes my father attends | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neither attend        | <input type="checkbox"/> |

E12 Do you attend any of the following associated with your place of worship? (*Tick all that apply*)

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Youth group (including Scouts and Guides) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Holiday club                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Summer camp                               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sunday school                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bible study group                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Madrassa/Qu'ranic school                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Homework club/after school club           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sporting activities                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Any others you can think of.....

E13 How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Brothers .....

Sisters.....

E14 How do you live? (*Tick the one which best describes how you live*)

- |                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| I live with my parents        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I live with my mother         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I live with my father         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I live with my grandparents   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I live with my foster parents | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Different from these          | <input type="checkbox"/> |

E15 Do any of your immediate family, those people who you live with, have any serious disabilities ( for example are partially sighted, use a wheelchair)? (*tick one box only*)

NO ☐

YES ☐

E16 If you know it please tell me what the highest qualification of your father was? (eg GCSEs, degree etc..)

E17 If you know it please tell me what the highest qualification of your mother was?

E18 How many books are in your home? (*tick one box*)

1-10 [ ]

11-50 [ ]

51-100 [ ]

101-200 [ ]

More than 200 [ ]

What are your parents' occupations (jobs)? If they do not work please say if they are retired, unemployed, studying, looking after the house/family or anything else. Give as much information as you can.

E19 Father:

E20 Mother

CONTINUE TO THE FINAL SECTION F

### Section F: What Do You Think?

The statements below are what people may think or say about things. You may find that most of the statements say things in the way you would. Or you may find that only a few statements say things in the way that you would. In any case, you will find that many students mark the statements in the same way that you do. The answers **you** mark should be what **you** think about things.

For each question tick one box +1, +2, +3 or -1,-2,-3 depending on how you feel in each case where

**+1: I agree a little**

**-1: I disagree a little**

**+2: I agree on the whole**

**-2: I disagree on the whole**

**+3: I agree very much**

**-3: I disagree very much**

	+3 Agree very much	+2 Agree on the whole	+1 Agree a little	-1 Disagree a little	-2 Disagree on the whole	-3 Disagree very much
1] We must believe what important people say. If we do not we will not know what is going on in the world.						
2] Most people just do not care about others						
3] It is not worth spending time listening to someone who will just try to change your mind.						
4] By saying things over and over you can be sure people know what you mean.						
5] People who think about themselves first are terrible.						
6] There is so much to do and so little time to do it in.						
7] It seems like many people I talk to do not really know about the good and bad things that are going on in the world.						
8] It does not matter much if you are not happy with now. It is what will happen in the years to come that counts.						



	+3	+2	+1	--1	--2	--3
	Agree very much	Agree on the whole	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree on the whole	Disagree very much
9] It is better to be a dead hero than a live coward.						
10] Many times I do not listen to what people are saying because I am thinking of what I will say next.						
11] People who do not believe in something important do not have much of a life.						
12] People get the most out of life when they try hard to do what they think is best.						
13] We have a good way of running our country. Even so, it would be better if we only let clever people do it.						
14] If people knew what I really thought, they might not like me.						
15] It is better to find out what clever people say about something before you say anything yourself.						
16] People seem to think that most of the things they do are bad.						
17] We are going against our own side if we listen to what the other side says.						
18] People should not try to work together if they believe different things.						
19] There are many ways to think about things in this world. Even so, there is only one right way.						
20] I cannot stand some people because of the way they think about things.						

## Appendix B: The Student Interview Schedule

### A. Identity

1a. Describe yourself- tell me which are the three most important things that you would want a person meeting you to know.

What three things would you want to know when you meet a new person for the first time- say at school or at a youth group?

b Who do you feel has most influence on your religious beliefs/what you believe about what is right and what is wrong.

2a. Do you feel as if your faith has changed since you came to this school? In what ways and what has made the difference.

b. How does the school encourage you and support you in your faith? How does it help you to explore your faith?

*Prompts: Groups to join*

*Retreats*

*Activities organised by the school*

3. Some people say that all schools should teach about all faiths, other people think that it is better to understand one faith first before learning about others. What do you think? How do you feel about what happens in this school?

*Prompts: Do you feel that this school gives you enough information about other faiths?*

*What does the school do well?*

*How could the school improve in this area?*

4a. What do you believe that your scriptures/ religion says about other religions and people who do not follow the rules you live by

b. Can you tell me what you think happens to people who are not of your faith when they die?

5a. How similar do you feel that your views and opinions and lifestyle are to those held by most people (of your age) in British society today?  
In what ways are your views different?

b. How do you think your faith group are viewed by most people in Britain today?

*Prompts: Are they respected*

*Are they ignored*

*Are members harassed?*

*Are they misunderstood?*

6. Can you think of a time in school where you held a different view but did not feel able to express this, or may be a view that you hold that you would not like to express. You don't have to tell me what it was/is, but can you tell me what stopped/ would stop you saying what you thought.

*Prompt For example maybe you feel something, say abortion, is wrong, but most people felt it was right or you liked a certain type of music that others would think was stupid.*

7a. Thinking about the students in this school can you tell me which characteristics are valued by the students in this school? What types of students are looked up to and admired?

What do the staff value. So if they were going to pick someone to be an ambassador for the school what type of person would they choose?

*Prompt: would it be someone sporty or academic or...*

b. Discounting anything criminal, what behaviours are the most disapproved of by the staff at this school? So what things would get you into trouble if you were found out doing them?

What behaviours etc.. are disapproved of by the students? So what things would annoy people or would be looked down on by other students

c. What do you think the school would want most for a person who went to this school? If you had to say one thing that this school most wanted for its pupils or most wanted its pupils to be or be like what would that be? So do you think they would most want you to be a xxxx or to have a good job or...

## **B: Active Tolerance**

1. In the USA some places ban public nativity scenes at Christmas in case they offend those of other faiths. In Birmingham several years ago the council decided to celebrate 'Winterval' instead of explicitly celebrating of Christmas, Divali, Eid/Ramadan etc. Some people thought that this was done because the council felt that overtly celebrating other faiths festivals would cause offence. In London the Mayor now holds public celebrations in Trafalgar Square to celebrate Divali, Chinese New Year, Eid as well as Christmas. What do you think about these two different approaches?
2. In your local area the local [ name ] is being forced to close (emphasise that it is not their decision). How would you respond? *Explore reason behind decision...*
3. In your local area the local council wish to open/close a centre for immigrants and those seeking asylum- not a detention centre, a support centre. How would you respond to this proposal?

## Appendix C: The Questionnaire Pilot

For reasons discussed below, two pilots were carried out on the questionnaire. The piloting of a questionnaire can be conducted in a number of different ways and for a variety of purposes. In conducting the pilots described here the intention was to test for comprehension and ease of use, although in the case of the first pilot it was also used to try and assess the validity and reliability indicators (De Vaus, 1996; Punch, 2003).

The questionnaire was initially piloted in a girls' independent school in Berkshire. The school caters for a mixed range of abilities, but does draw its intake almost exclusively from the white middle classes. Hence a second pilot was also conducted in an inner London comprehensive school which had a diverse ethnic and social mix of students. It was also a faith school (Church of England), but one in which the students came from a wide variety of religious backgrounds, including a large number of Muslims.

In both schools the pilot took a similar form, with about twenty students in each school participating. The students were aware that this was a pilot study, but the questionnaire was otherwise administered as it would be in the research. The week before the piloting took place the parents were informed by letter that their children would be asked to participate in the study and were given the opportunity to raise any concerns at this stage. Informed consent was obtained from each of the students on the day of the pilot. After the questionnaire about 50% of the students were interviewed regarding aspects of the questionnaire. The students were asked to comment on

- a. the items in general
- b. if there were any items they found inappropriate
- c. any specific difficulties, particularly in understanding
- d. how they interpreted certain questions.

Based on the responses changes were made, most of which were related to the need for more signposting in some places. The first pilot necessitated three major revisions. The first involved the use of the term ethnic. The students were uncertain about the meaning of this, preferring the term racial. It was decided to use the two words in combination eg. ethnic/racial.

In section E, the dogmatism questions, the use of +3/-3 numerical scale was disliked by some and so the columns were labelled in addition to the numbers.

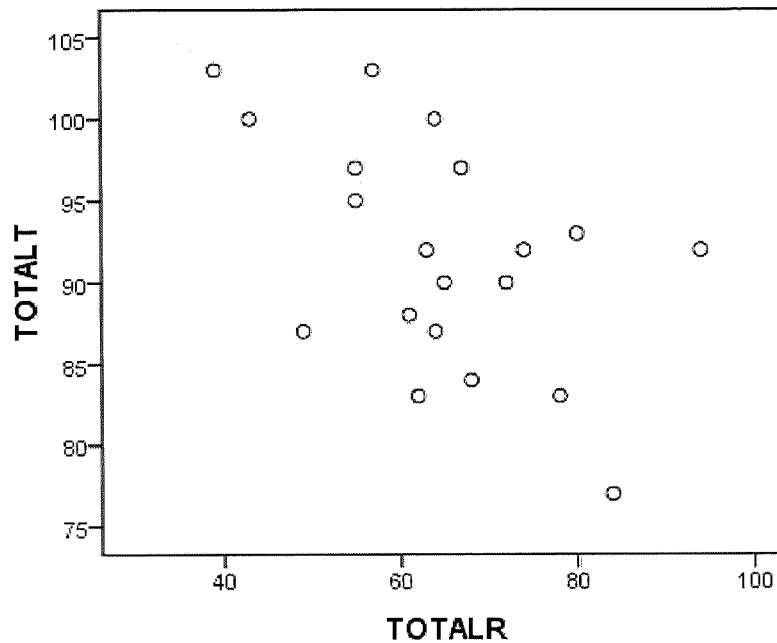
## **Analysing the pilot data**

The analysis of the pilot data was restricted to section A as this was the only section in which any measure of validity could be obtained.

### **Section A:**

Each question was coded numerically on a scale of 5-1, where 5 indicated the most tolerant response, and the results entered into SPSS. This was done for each question so that each identity marker could subsequently be considered separately. An aggregate score for each candidate was obtained, with a higher score indicating a more tolerant attitude.

Although many of the questions in Section A have come from previous studies, the validity of this set of questions has not been determined. The Rokeach scale which has undergone significant amounts of validity testing can act as a suitable scale against which to assess the validity of Section A (De Vaus, 1996). The dogmatism scale measures mainly structural intolerance. This is concerned with the way the belief is held rather than content intolerance, which is more concerned with the actual belief itself. But it is not inappropriate to assume that there will still be a high correlation between this measure of structural intolerance and general intolerance. A scatter plot was produced of the Rokeach scores against the Tolerance total. The two tailed Pearson correlation was found to give a correlation of -0.512 and was significant at the 0.05 level. Although caution must be expressed at this stage because the range of the individual scores obtained was quite narrow and the sample small, this correlation suggests that the questions in Section A are not a completely inappropriate measure of general intolerance. It must also be remembered that Section A is only one of several indicators of tolerance being used in this study.



Graph C1: Scatter plot of Total score of the Rokeach Dogmatism score and the General Tolerance measure.

The questions in this section were also considered in respect of their reliability. Questions which pertained to the same identity markers were compared for each respondent's consistency of response. Three questions, relating to class, sexual preference and free speech, all in a number of cases showed significantly different responses to the other related questions. Subsequent work with individual Year 10 students indicated that this difference was likely to be the result of differences in cognitive understanding and thus the wording of these questions was modified to account for this.

### Appendix D: School Aspects in the Student Interviews and Questionnaire

School Aspect	Areas Covered	Questionnaire	Student Interview Question
The Religious Identity	The importance of the religious identity to the student and the nature of that identity (exclusivist/inclusivist/pluralist,) How distinctive the identity was. Perceived threats to the identity and permeability. The role of the school in the formation of the religious identity.	B part 2 and C1-4	A1a (importance) A5a. (distinctiveness) A5b. (threats) A1b;2a,b;7c (school's role) A4a,b (nature)
Contact	The extent and type of contact with the Religious Other and to what extent it was felt that the school was preparing the students for life in a multicultural society.	Section C and D1	A3
Cognitive Sophistication	The extent to which issues and the opinions of others could be explored and whether it was felt that aspects of the students' faith and associated religious authority could be challenged within the school. (Classroom Climate)	Section D2	A6
Socialization	Whether the school was promoting certain groups as out-groups or promoting particular behaviours.	D1.3 and 1.5.	A7a,b

## Appendix E: Faith School Definitions

### The Working Definition of 'faith school' Used in this Research:

In this thesis the term 'faith school' was chosen to describe the schools which are associated with faith groups, and which form the focus of this research. The reasons for this choice are given in Chapter 1.3. Below is a working definition of how the term 'faith school' is understood in this research (see also Chapter 3.4):

**A faith school is one in which the primary aim is faith nurture.**

Faith nurture involves the desire to help the students to develop a religious identity and to strengthen their religious commitment, as well as the preservation of the faith and the religious tradition.

### Department for Education Designation of 'Schools with a Religious Character':

Below are the Department for Education criteria, at least one of which a school needs to fulfil in order to be designated as having a 'religious character'.

'Maintained faith schools must be designated as having a religious character by the Secretary of State by order, if they meet at least one of the following criteria:

- At least one member of the governing body is appointed as a foundation governor to represent the interests of a religion or religious denomination.
- If the school should close, the premises will be disposed of in accordance with the requirements of the trust which may be for the benefit of one or more religions or religious denominations.
- The foundation which owns the site has made it available on the condition that the school provides education in accordance with the tenets of the faith.

The order states the religion or religious denomination of the school as reflected in the school's trust deeds. This in turn determines the religious education which the school will be **required** to provide, in the case of VA schools; or **may** provide, in the case of VC or foundation schools.' (DfE, 2012).



## **Definition of the Faith Schools Involved in the Research**

### **Roman Catholic School:**

A Roman Catholic School will be defined as one which is recognised as such by the Roman Catholic Church (Catholic Education Service (Great Britain), 2003)

### **Evangelical or New Christian School:**

The main umbrella organisation representing these schools is the Christian Schools Trust (CST) and thus membership of this organisation will indicate that a school is suitable to be included in this category. However, for a school to be included in this category it is necessary to consider their statement of faith. The key aspects of the statement of faith, principally based on those supplied by CST (Christian Schools' Trust, 2009) are :

- Belief in the inerrancy of the Bible
- Belief in the ultimate authority of the Bible
- Belief that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ
- Acceptance of Jesus Christ as ones personal saviour.

### **Muslim or Islamic School:**

Here the umbrella organisation is the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS, 2011) and again membership of this organisation will be taken as indicative of a school being in this category. A formal definition has not yet been obtained from this body. However, Gulham Sarwar from the Muslim Educational Trust would define an Islamic education as:

‘the process through which human beings are trained and prepared in a concerted way to do their Creator’s bidding in this life (*Dunya*) to be rewarded in the life after death (*Ākhirah*)’ (Sarwar, 1996)

## Appendix F: Interview Respondents

### Student Interview respondents

School	Student Initials (pseudonym)	Male/Female	UK born	Faith
MI	Yousef	MALE	YES	MUSLIM
	Ibrahim	MALE	YES	MUSLIM
	Suliman	MALE	NO	MUSLIM
	Hussain	MALE	NO	MUSLIM
	Yasmin	FEMALE	YES	MUSLIM
	Saira	FEMALE	NO	MUSLIM
	Zainab	FEMALE	YES	MUSLIM
	Noor	FEMALE	YES	MUSLIM
NFI	Anthony	MALE	YES	NONE
	Hugh	MALE	YES	NONE
	Georgina	FEMALE	YES	CofE
	Pippa	FEMALE	YES	JEWISH
	Laura	FEMALE	YES	PROTESTANT
	Alicia	FEMALE	YES	NONE
RCS	Sean	MALE	YES	RC
	Joseph	MALE	YES	RC
	Dan	MALE	YES	RC
	Rhys	MALE	YES	RC
	Rhianna	FEMALE	YES	RC
	Jennifer	FEMALE	YES	RC
	Hannah	FEMALE	YES	RC
	Grace	FEMALE	YES	PENTECOSTAL
NFS	Michael	MALE	YES	NONE
	Hassan	MALE	YES	MUSLIM
	James	MALE	YES	NONE
	Edward	MALE	YES	NONE
	Katie	FEMALE	YES	NONE
	Chantelle	FEMALE	YES	METHODIST
	Charlotte	FEMALE	YES	CHRISTIAN
	Louisa	FEMALE	YES	CofE
ECI	Luke	MALE	YES	EVANGELICAL
	Nick	MALE	YES	EVANGELICAL
	Ben	MALE	YES	EVANGELICAL
	Laurence	MALE	YES	EVANGELICAL
	Anna	FEMALE	YES	EVANGELICAL
	Sarah	FEMALE	NO	EVANGELICAL
	Esther	FEMALE	YES	EVANGELICAL
	Rebecca	FEMALE	YES	EVANGELICAL

RCI Pair A	Mark	MALE	YES	RC
	Jon	MALE	YES	RC
	Matt	MALE	YES	RC
Pair B	Gregory	MALE	YES	RC
	Emily	FEMALE	YES	RC
Pair C	Harriet	FEMALE	YES	RC
	Christina	FEMALE	YES	RC
Pair D	Annabel	FEMALE	YES	CofE

#### Staff Interview Respondents

School	Position within school	Male/Female
MI	Head Teacher	MALE
	Islamic Studies teacher	FEMALE
	PSHE coordinator	FEMALE
	Imam and RE and Islamic	MALE
	Studies teacher	
NFI	Deputy Head	MALE
	Head of RE	MALE
RCS	Deputy Head	MALE
	Head of RE	MALE
	Head of Year 10	MALE
	Chaplain	FEMALE
NFS	Assistant Head	MALE
	Head of Year 10	MALE
	Head of RE/Beliefs and Values	FEMALE
	Head of PSHEE	FEMALE
ECI	Head Teacher	MALE
	Head of Life Skills	FEMALE
	Head of RE	FEMALE
	Church youth worker	MALE
RCI	Head Teacher	MALE
	Chaplain and head of boarding house	MALE
	School counsellor	MALE
	Head of Christian Theology	MALE
	Head of Health Education	MALE
	Chaplaincy Assistant	FEMALE
	Head of Christian Living	FEMALE
	Christian Living teacher	MALE
	Director of Admissions	FEMALE
	Director of Studies	MALE
	Teacher of English	FEMALE

### Appendix G: Research Schedule

<b>Term</b>	<b>Approximate timing</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Autumn 2009</b>	September/October 2009	Questionnaire Administered in schools	All year 10 students. Administered in tutor time by HE or tutor. Time to complete 20mins
	October-December 2009	Two days initial observation	Shadowing year 10 pupil/pupils- all subjects
<b>Spring 2010</b>	January - March 2010	Two days observation	Observation focus on RE, Citizenship and possibly PSHE All year groups
	February- March 2010	Student interviews	Individual student interviews with 8 students from each school Interview length 25-30mins
<b>Summer 2010</b>	April-June 2010	Complete student interviews Complete outstanding observations	
	May-July 2010	Staff interviews	Interviews with key members of staff including Head or member of SMT and Head of RE. Report of preliminary questionnaire analysis findings discussed as part of the Head's interview. Interviews of approximately 30-45mins

### Appendix H: School Characteristics

	School					
	NFI	NFS	RCI	RCS	ECI	MI
Age range	7-19	11-19	13-19	11-16	11-16	11-16
Type	Independent Day	State maintained comprehensive Day	Independent Boarding	State maintained comprehensive Day	Independent Day	Independent Day
School size(approx)	1250	1000	600	680	200	300
Year 10 size	135	180	120	120	27	
% SEN pupils	n/a	7.2	n/a	13.8	n/a	n/a
Faith	none	none	Roman Catholic (run by religious order)	Roman Catholic (diocesan controlled)	Evangelical Christian (students must attend specific church)	Muslim (Hanafi and leadership Sunni)
Location	Inner London	Inner London	Rural, but students from a variety of locations throughout UK with 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> from outside UK.	Inner London	Home Counties	Inner London
<sup>367</sup> GCSE % 5 A*-C [2009]	98	79	93	90	83	91
<sup>368</sup> GCSE % 5 A*-C including English and Maths [2009]	n/a	69	82	74	70	76

<sup>367</sup> From Department for Education 'Compare Schools' section of the website (Department for Education, 2011)

### Appendix I: Year 10 Background Characteristics

	% Year 10 pupils					
Measure (Number in Year)	RCI	RCS	ECI	MI	NFI	NFS
<b>Pupil born in UK</b>	74	65	88	82	87	74
<b>At least one parent born outside UK</b>	43	64	21	91	58	57
<b>Frequency that English is spoken at home</b>						
Always	80	87	91	43	79	82
Sometimes	11	10	9	57	19	15
Never	9	3	-	-	2	3
<b>Religion</b>						
Roman Catholic	74	76	-	-	12	12
Anglican	18	8	-	-	17	13
Baptist	2	-	-	-	-	2
Methodist	-	-	-	-	1	2
Other Christian	-	1-	91	-	2	4
Buddhist	1	-	-	-	2	-
Hindu	-	-	-	-	8	1
Jewish	-	-	-	-	5	-
Muslim	-	-	-	100	2	16
Sikh	-	-	-	-	-	1
Other	-	-	-	-	-	2
None	5	15	9	-	51	49

	RCI	RCS	ECI	MI	NFI	NFS
<b>Attend activity at their place of worship</b>	37	34	100	80	39	37
<b>Student's religious attendance</b>						
Weekly	78	34	82	77	10	27
Twice a month	9	8	9	2	12	5
Once a month	2	9	9	7	20	10
Major festivals only	5	22	-	11	44	29
Own home	-	-	-	2	7	11
Never	4	25	-	-	7	18
<b>Parents' attendance</b>						
Mother only attends	12	41	5	9	22	29
Father only attends	4	5	5	25	12	13
Both parents attend	55	38	86	60	46	31
Neither parent attends	29	17	5	7	20	27
<b>Average Rokeach score</b>						
Named School	79	81	71	81	72	74
Others	75	75	76	79	77	77
	These two are not significantly different.	Significantly different at 5% level	These two are not significantly different	These two are not significantly different	Significantly different	These two are not significantly different

**Appendix J: School Area Ethnic and Religious Statistics**  
**Ethnic composition of the Local Authority area in which the school is situated (ONS, 2004)**

Ethnic group	% of population					
	RCI	RCS	ECI	MI	NFI	NFS
White	98.3	55.3	94.6	67.9	62.9	49.7
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0.1	1.4	0.4	1.1	1.2	1.0
Mixed: White and Black African	0.0	0.8	0.1	0.5	0.6	0.5
Mixed: White and Asian	0.1	0.6	0.3	0.9	1.0	1.2
Mixed: Other Mixed	0.1	1.0	0.3	0.9	1.0	1.0
Asian or British Asian	0.1	4.1	1.2	6.9	4.4	24.6
Black or Black British: Caribbean	0.0	8.0	0.4	4.9	5.2	4.5
Black or Black British: African	0.1	16.1	0.2	3.9	4.9	3.7
Black or Black British: Other Black	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.9	1.1	0.6
Other	0.2	3.3	0.6	2.1	2.8	4.3



Religious Group composition of the Local Authority area in which the school is situated (ONS, 2004)

	% of population					
Religious group	RCI	RCS	ECI	MI	NFI	NFS
Christian	82.3	61.6	74.0	61.8	63.7	50.7
Buddhist	0.1	1.1	0.2	0.7	0.8	1.0
Hindu	0.0	1.1	0.5	2.3	1.1	7.8
Jewish	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.7	0.8	0.5
Muslim	0.1	6.9	0.5	5.2	6.9	10.3
Sikh	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	8.5
Other religions	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
No religion	10.7	18.5	17.0	20.0	17.6	13.4
Religion not stated	6.6	9.9	7.2	8.8	8.6	7.3

## **Appendix K: Technical Details**

### **The Analysis of the Student Tolerance Questions: Chapter 7**

#### **The Choice of Analysis: Multi-level Analysis v a Fixed Effects Model**

In order to conduct the analysis of the questionnaire data which related to the students' attitudes of tolerance it was necessary to consider the data at two levels; the individual (student) level, which is the level at which the tolerance data was collected, and the school level. Because the data was nested, in that we are looking at students within schools, problems were raised over correlations between the variables. Multi level analysis would have been an effective way to tackle this problem, but due to the sample size with respect to the school variable this was not possible (multilevel analysis requires a minimum sample size of 10 and preferably deals with sample sizes of at least 30 (Field, 2009)). Nevertheless it was possible to construct a 'fixed effects model' with the sample size of 6. One of the problems with this method is reduced as the survey design did not involve sampling at the individual level, as all year 10 students were involved. Using a fixed effects model does, however, mean that the findings cannot be generalised to the population of faith schools.

#### **General Tolerance Questions (Passive Tolerance) Section A**

In a preliminary analysis of the data, an inspection of the correlation matrix highlighted three problematic questions which had a significant number of correlations below 0.4. The first of these (QA4) asked about freedom of speech for religious groups, and the second two (QA1 and 8) were both related to gender and could possibly have been being interpreted as relating to sexual equality rather than tolerance. The decision was therefore taken to delete these three items.

A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the remaining 10 items with orthogonal (varimax) rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling accuracy (KMO = 0.843) a score which is considered good (Field 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $\chi^2_{45} = 1436.952$   $p < 0.001$ ) indicated that correlation between items were sufficiently large for PCA. An analysis was run to obtain an eigenvalue for each component in the data. Two components had Eigenvalues of or over Kaiser's criteria of 1 and above and this explained 52.097% of the variance. The scree plot inflections also justified the retention of two components. The first component contained the majority of the questions and so was considered to provide a measure of General Tolerance, whereas

the second contained the two questions on sexual orientation and so this was considered to relate to Sexual Tolerance. The General Tolerance component had a Cronbach's  $\alpha > 0.7$  in this case  $\alpha = 0.707$  which is within the range which Kline considers indicates good reliability. For the second component, Sexual Tolerance, the reliability is lower with the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  slightly outside the range indicated by Kline ( $\alpha = 0.578$ ) (Kline 2000). The item inter-correlation is still acceptable at 0.406 and the low Cronbach's  $\alpha$  may be due to the fact that only two items are included in this component. In addition an  $\alpha < 0.7$  is not considered unusual for psychological constructs such as those tested here (Kline 2000, Wiggins 2010)

### **General Religious Tolerance (Active): Questionnaire Section B Part 1 Views on Religion**

Consideration was given to whether the nine items in section B1 could be considered as one component. In a preliminary analysis of the data an inspection of the correlation matrix highlighted two questions (QB1.3 and QB1.6) with a significant number of correlations below 0.3, although this was much greater in the case of QB1.6. The decision was therefore taken to initially delete QB1.6

A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the remaining 8 items with orthogonal (varimax) rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling accuracy (KMO = 0.872) a score which is considered good (Field 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $\chi^2_{28} = 1065.854$   $p < 0.001$ ) indicated that correlation between items was sufficiently large for PCA. An analysis was run to obtain an Eigenvalue for each component in the data. Only one component had an Eigenvalue over Kaiser's criterion of 1 which explained 45.5% of the variance. The items within this component, Religious Tolerance, could be seen to relate to general religious tolerance. The component showed good reliability having a Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.818$ . The factor score generated was used in the analysis.

### **Average General Tolerance Scores [Chapter 7.3.1 and 7.4.1]**

Generally the analysis on the tolerance indicators (General, Homosexual and Religious tolerance) was conducted using the factor scores generated from the principal component analysis. However, it was felt that in some instances it was more informative to be able to compare the level of tolerance, for example whether the students were tolerant or intolerant, something it was not easy to ascertain from the factor scores. Therefore in

some cases Average Tolerance Scores were calculated and used. These were an average of the sum of the responses from the individual items pertaining to each tolerance measure. Each score ranged from 1-5 and a score of 3 and over indicated a tolerant response and under 3 an intolerant response. The higher the score the more tolerant the students were, and therefore a score less than, but close to, 3 indicates mild intolerance, whereas a score close to 1 indicates that the students are very intolerant.

## Appendix L: t-Statistics

Table L1: General and Homosexual tolerance showing t- statistics

VARIABLE	General Tolerance		Homosexual Tolerance	
	Standardised $\beta$	t-statistic	Standardised $\beta$	t-statistic
Roman Catholic independent	-0.169	-1.896	0.166	-1.837
Roman Catholic state	-0.0404	-0.535	0.052	0.674
Evangelical Christian independent	-0.144	-1.253	-0.163	-1.765
Muslim independent	0.103	1.137	-0.119	-1.291
Non faith independent	0.058	0.789	<b>0.158*</b>	<b>2.115</b>
Non faith state	REFERENCE	REFERENCE	REFERENCE	REFERENCE
Rokeach	<b>-0.211**</b>	<b>-3.855</b>	<b>-0.173**</b>	<b>-3.115</b>
GENDER (Boy=1)	-0.075	-1.357	<b>-0.287**</b>	<b>-5.120</b>
BOOKS	<b>0.162**</b>	<b>2.586</b>	0.047	0.725
STUETH (White=1)	<b>-0.256**</b>	<b>-3.143</b>	0.026	0.320
STUBIRTH (UK born=1)	0.070	1.223	0.016	0.276
PARBIRTH (Both UK=1)	0.080	1.208	0.057	0.846
Attend Major Festivals	0.035	0.405	0.027	0.313
Attend Regularly (at least once a month)	0.140	1.535	0.018	0.198
Roman Catholic	0.297	0.629	0.250	0.517
Other Christian (including Evangelical)	0.191	0.701	0.109	0.382
Church of England	0.112	0.310	0.146	0.397
Muslim	0.274	0.690	0.169	0.418
Other non Christian	-0.022	-0.096	0.022	0.095
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	24.7%		20.9%	

\*\* significant at 1% level; \* significant at 5% level

Table L2: SES tolerance showing t-statistics

VARIABLE	SES Tolerance	
	Standardised $\beta$	t-statistic
Roman Catholic independent	-0.128	-1.372
Roman Catholic state	-0.098	-1.252
Evangelical Christian independent	-0.035	-0.375
Muslim independent	0.112	1.180
Non faith independent	0.058	0.746
Non faith state	REFERENCE	REFERENCE
Rokeach	<b>-0.180**</b>	<b>-3.137</b>
GENDER (Boy=1)	-0.090	-1.562
BOOKS	0.093	1.418
STUETH (White=1)	-0.144	-1.692
STUBIRTH (UK born=1)	<b>0.133*</b>	<b>2.225</b>
PARBIRTH (Both UK=1)	0.104	1.499
Attend Major Festivals	-0.086	-0.959
Attend Regularly (at least once a month)	0.029	0.304
Roman Catholic	0.462	0.931
Other Christian (including Evangelical)	0.170	0.580
Church of England	0.187	0.496
Muslim	0.361	0.870
Other non Christian	-0.012	-0.050
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	16.3%	

\*\* significant at 1% level; \* significant at 5% level

Table L3: Religious tolerance showing t-statistics

VARIABLE	Religious Tolerance	
	Standardised $\beta$	t-statistic
Roman Catholic independent	-0.024	-0.259
Roman Catholic state	-0.038	-0.486
Evangelical Christian independent	0.011	0.110
Muslim independent	-0.035	-0.366
Non faith independent	0.110	1.410
Non faith state	REFERENCE	REFERENCE
Rokeach	-0.050	-0.866
GENDER (Boy=1)	<b>-0.175**</b>	<b>-3.017</b>
BOOKS	-0.040	0.618
STUETH (White=1)	<b>-0.238**</b>	<b>-2.746</b>
STUBIRTH (UK born=1)	0.048	0.788
PARBIRTH (Both UK=1)	0.031	0.433
Attend Major Festivals	-0.086	-0.911
Attend Regularly (at least once a month)	<b>0.215*</b>	<b>2.143</b>
Roman Catholic	0.072	0.147
Other Christian (including Evangelical)	-0.045	-0.157
Church of England	-0.028	-0.076
Muslim	0.192	0.486
Other non Christian	-0.054	-0.227
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	20.6%	

\*\* significant at 1% level; \* significant at 5% level

## Appendix M: Is there an Indirect School Effect?

The t- statistics for the General , Homosexual, and SES tolerance measures all indicated that the extent to which a person has an authoritarian personality was a significant explanatory variable of these attitudes ( all at the 1% level). In the case of General and SES tolerance this was the most important explanatory variable. The question that this raised was whether there was an indirect school effect, meaning that, instead of the school impacting on the students' attitudes of tolerance directly, what was possibly occurring was that the school was making the students more authoritarian, which was in turn making them less tolerant (fig 1 )

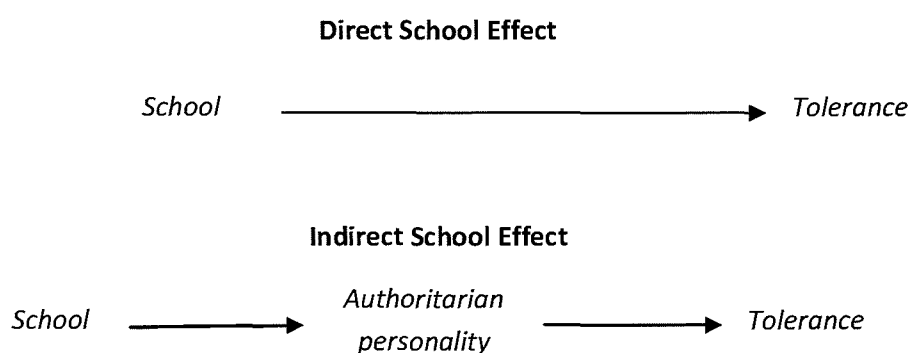


fig 1: Direct and Indirect paths

If this indirect effect were the case then, although this increase in authoritarianism would be the result of some aspect of the school, the regression analysis would not indicate this. The effect of the school on authoritarianism would be indicated through the authoritarian variable, not the school variable, and would increase the significance of the authoritarian variable.

In order to investigate whether this was the case, further analyses were conducted. In the first a regression analysis was run using the Rokeach score as the dependent variable (table M1). If there was an indirect school effect then it would be expected that the school would be a significant explanatory variable in this case. This was not seen, which gave a strong indication that there was no indirect school effect. Furthermore, it also indicated that the Rokeach score was not strongly correlated with the other explanatory variables, apart from the gender variable.

In addition regression analyses were run using the main tolerance indicators (General, Homosexual and Religious tolerance) as the dependent variables, but this time



omitting the Rokeach score from the list of explanatory variables (table M2). Again none of the schools were indicated to be significant explanatory variables. Therefore it can be concluded that it is highly unlikely that there is an indirect school effect with authoritarianism as the intermediate variable.

Table M1: Determinants of Multiple Linear Regression of Rokeach Scores

VARIABLE	Rokeach (Standardized $\beta$ Coefficients)
Roman Catholic independent	-0.048
Roman Catholic state	0.067
Evangelical Christian independent	-0.075
Muslim independent	-0.183
Non faith independent	-0.152
Non faith state	REFERENCE
GENDER (Boy=1)	<b>0.178**</b>
BOOKS	0.057
STUETH (White=1)	-0.034
STUBIRTH (UK born=1)	-0.001
PARBIRTH (Both UK=1)	0.036
Attend major festivals only	0.013
Attend place of worship regularly (at least once a month)	-0.033
Roman Catholic	0.146
Other Christian (including Evangelical)	0.016
Church of England	0.030
Muslim	0.045
Other non Christian	0.163
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	4.3%

\*\* significant at 1% level; \* significant at 5% level

Table M2: Determinants of Multiple Linear Regression of General, Homosexual and Religious Tolerance indicators omitting Rokeach Scores

VARIABLE	General Tolerance	Homosexual Tolerance	Religious Tolerance
Roman Catholic independent	-0.151	-0.154	-0.015
Roman Catholic state	-0.082	-0.044	-0.051
Evangelical Christian independent	-0.081	-0.145	0.037
Muslim independent	0.053	-0.133	-0.053
Non faith independent	0.106	0.181* <sup>369</sup>	0.124
Non faith state	REFERENCE	REFERENCE	REFERENCE
GENDER (Boy=1)	-0.093	-0.297	-0.173**
BOOKS	0.116	0.018	0.019
STUETH (White=1)	-0.232**	0.069	-0.234**
STUBIRTH (UK born=1)	0.057	0.009	0.057
PARBIRTH (Both UK=1)	0.083	0.064	0.044
Attend Major Festivals	0.059	0.055	-0.031
Attend Regularly (at least once a month)	0.188*	0.061	0.285**
Roman Catholic	0.663	0.242	0.331
Other Christian (including Evangelical)	0.412	0.116	0.089
Church of England	0.404	0.133	0.170
Muslim	0.633*	0.180	0.420
Other non Christian	0.131	0.009	0.063
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	21.6%	15.1%	21.7%

\*\* significant at 1% level; \* significant at 5% level

<sup>369</sup> This school was significant at the 5% level when the Rokeach was included and thus this does not indicate an indirect effect.